

The Ways of Gore Vidal

The Waning of the Political Parties

THE

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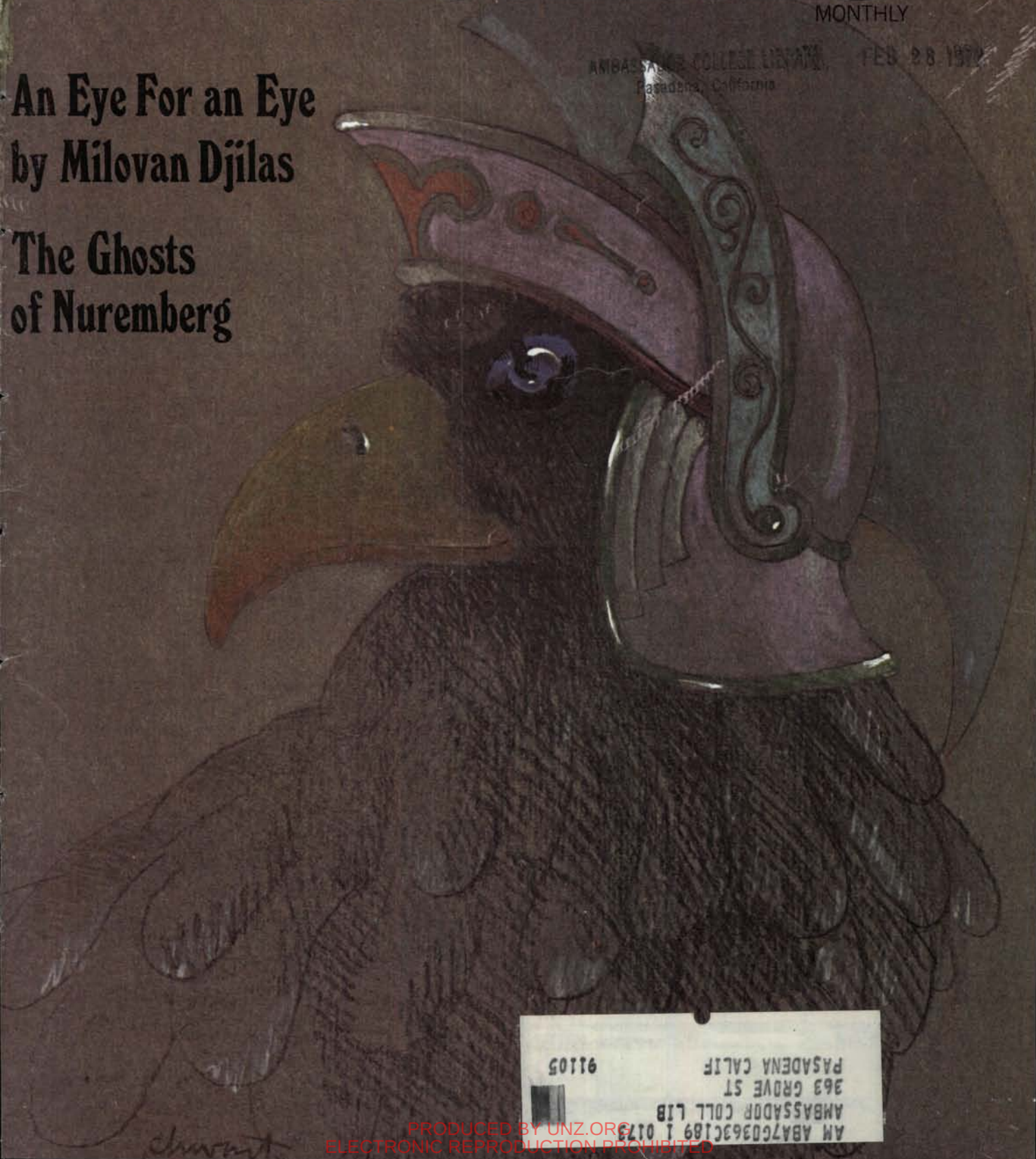
MONTHLY

An Eye For an Eye
by Milovan Djilas

The Ghosts
of Nuremberg

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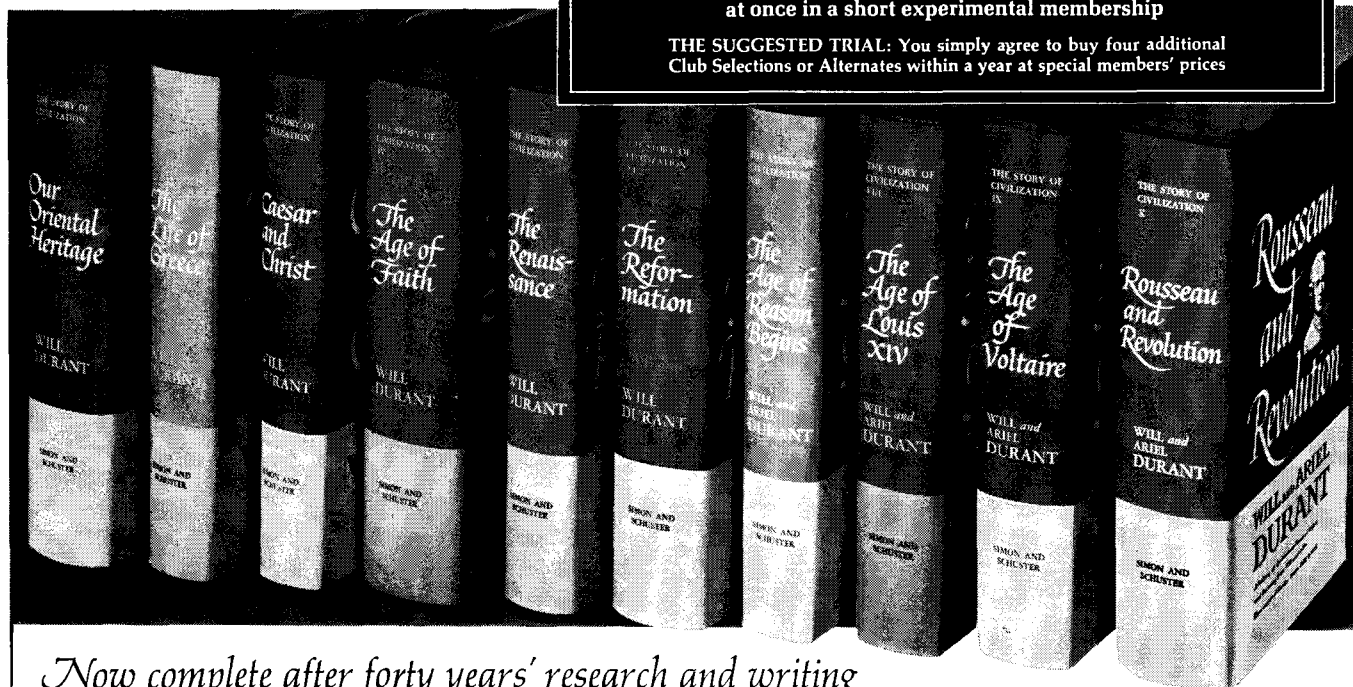
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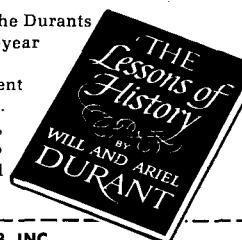
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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The subject of man's inhumanity to man receives more than a little attention in this issue, and that is not a matter of coincidence. Violence is so much in evidence in these days of a seemingly senseless war in Vietnam, and of massacre by sword and starvation of perhaps millions on the Indian subcontinent, that a member of the younger generation might be excused for thinking that violence is a particular characteristic of the second half of the twentieth century. In America we have become especially conscious of the prevalence of blood crime, shaken as we are by the assassination of a President and two political leaders in a span of eight years, by racial riots and burnings, radicals' bombings, shootings of students, and by all that led to those moments in the distant village of My Lai. Are we residents of an abnormally violent country in an abnormally violent world, members of a retrogressive humankind? Or are we simply hearing and seeing more that describes the normal state of the human race because of the speed and intensity of modern communications?

The hardly comforting fact is that human beings have always behaved cruelly and murderously

Milovan Djilas



toward each other, and some times have been more notable for violence than the present. When it comes to body counts and methodology of violence, the first half of the twentieth century certainly vies with the second half; beginning on page 62 you will find two eloquent reminders of this fact.

The first is a story by one of the most interesting politicians in Europe, Milovan Djilas of Yugoslavia. Fiction based on firsthand fact, "An Eye for An Eye" documents how violence begets counterviolence, turning the sinned-against into sinners themselves. The story is one of a collection by Mr. Djilas that will be published this month. It is a book that displays yet another side of Milovan Djilas, who is known primarily as a political figure. A fervent prewar Communist, he rose to power in postwar Yugoslavia, becoming head of parliament and Vice President under Marshal Tito. He made the mistake of prematurely calling for democratization of Tito's Communist rule, was expelled from the Party, and imprisoned first for five years and then, after brief freedom, for another four. Before and during his imprisonment, he wrote several books on political and economic questions, the best-known probably being *The New Class*.

The companion piece to Mr. Djilas' horror tale of Magyars against Serbs is a recollection of the Nuremberg Trials by an American who served during them as an interrogator of some of the leading Nazis. Philipp Fehl, a Viennese refugee who is professor of the history of art at the University of Illinois, has made a special study of premeditated slaughter in history. His first paper on the subject, "Mass Murder and the Art of Dying Well," appeared last year in *Theology Today*.

But be not discouraged: there is much more than grimness in store. Calvin Trillin, a sometime contributor, is back (page 88) and having fun with the late Nikita Khrushchev; Anne Sexton, the prizewinning poet, will charm you with a parable (page 40); a new contributor, Robert Cantwell, journeys into the resonant world of bluegrass music; and a profiler, Gerald Clarke, presents the writer Gore Vidal poking fun or ridicule at just about everybody—except, of course, Mr. Vidal.

Robert Manning



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REPORTS & COMMENT

THE DEMOCRATS

Great violet shafts from searchlights swept the sky outside O'Brien's Persian Palace Theater. The greatest political rally would not begin for another hour, but crowd-builders for each of the fifty-four Democratic candidates for President of the United States, using fast tongues, money, and strong-arm tactics, had cajoled nearly 100,000 persons into the street. Each carried a placard on a stick. "TRUST MUSKIE," said many of the signs; TRUST MCGOVERN," said others. Some said, "HUBERT HORATIO HUMPHREY, A GREAT AMERICAN YOU CAN TRUST." "TRUST YORTY." "TRUST JACKSON." And on and on and on. "TRUST HARTKE."

Police ringed the growing mob. Strung over the street were ten-foot-tall electric letters that said: "THE MR. PRESIDENT BEAUTY PAGEANT." Advance women for Shirley Chisholm climbed on each other's shoulders to try to punch out the "MR." with their sticks. A television crew pushed through the throng.

"What a crowd, folks!" a commentator shouted into his microphone. "What a crowd! There must be 300,000 excited fans outside O'Brien's Persian tonight. The police can't hold them. Here, listen to them roar."

A noise-starter for one of the candidates took the cue and began shouting at the top of his lungs. A noise-starter for another candidate spurred his group to greater noise. Soon, the clamor was like a volcano erupting.

Sound men held their parabolic mikes aloft. The commentator screamed, "Did you hear it? It's a bedlam, folks. A veritable bedlam! What excitement! Of all the political rallies

I've attended, this is the most . . . the most . . . stupendous, folks. Can the police hold them? Can they? It doesn't look like they can, folks."

The candidates began arriving in open cars. "There's Scoop," someone screamed. Jackson advance men prodded people to tug at his sleeves. "I'm gonna roll up my sleeves à la Harry Truman and tell it like it is," cried Henry Jackson. His sleeves were ripped away. George McGovern shouted, "I'm the only decent man there is!" A throng hoisted his wife, Eleanor, on their shoulders and yelled, "Let Eleanor do it!" Ed Muskie arrived. He said something that sounded very good. The crowd became quieter; some fell asleep. Even Bayh, Hughes, and Harris were there, dreams still flickering. Shriver and Clark. Anderson and Chisholm and Mink and Mills. McCarthy, Wallace, and Aurelio. Yorty. Hartke, Hartke, and Hartke. Proxmire, eschewing a convertible, jogged into the mass. Hubert Humphrey's voice rang out: "Oh, my goodness. It makes me pleased as punch to see all your familiar faces once more. I can't express how happy it makes me to see all my dear friends again. I just want to take this opportunity to let everyone here know that I'm so . . ."

And where it ends . . .

It had become the longest campaign well before candidates began shuttling between New Hampshire and Florida with countdown intensity, if you forget Andrew Jackson's, which is easy, and Richard Nixon's last, which is not so easy. When it began was long ago lost in the crisscross of hopefuls' planes increasing the midair-collision risk as

they raced each other to the next stop to say things which the one who had just left had already said.

Did it begin for Muskie that day in Washington, Pennsylvania, during the 1968 campaign when he invited a student heckler to the platform and almost instantaneously became a new national political hero? If so, Muskie didn't let on the rest of the day. Nor did '72 seem really viable in the months he fruitlessly wandered the country trying to build on his new reputation after the '68 election, for, he conceded at lunch one day the following July, Ted Kennedy certainly did seem the inevitable Democratic choice. Muskie added an important caveat: "If I learned one thing in 1968, it is that you never know what's going to happen tomorrow."

About fifteen hours later, Teddy drove off a bridge. Muskie was Front-Runner.

Was that the beginning? Kennedy's tragedy certainly opened a big door, though George McGovern would insist in the summer of 1971, "I would have gone ahead no matter what he did."

Gene McCarthy's example undoubtedly emboldened some who felt that they could become a somebody if Gene had. Nixon's seeming vulnerability after the '70 election probably spurred others.

A definable beginning thus gets lost in these and many other factors. It's enough to say that a whole bunch began running, and in the process threatened to turn 1972 into a Year of the Locust. For all each of them said through 1970 and 1971, all the millions of words that were written were, by the time 1972 finally came, about as memorable as the names of the last two moon walkers. A reporter shrugs

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THE DEMOCRATS

as he flips through old notebooks. The only interesting things left are pages of vignettes, like so many flakes of New Hampshire snow, or grains of Florida sand, which, when mixed in the right proportions, produce the makings for sand castles, and children and politicians know about them. Usually they crumble or get kicked over, if a wave doesn't get them first, as Birch Bayh, among others, can attest.

Bayh, Hughes

It's October, 1970, about ten months after Bayh and some friends and financial backers agree that he should explore a run for President. This particular afternoon Bayh is at a small television station in Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

Before the taping, the interviewer is making sure of his facts. "Uh, what state are you from, Senator?" Bayh barely flinches; after all, the marquee outside an Omaha hotel had said, "WELCOME SENATOR BLIGH." "In-

diana," Bayh answers. "Oh, yeah," the interviewer says. "Uh, just so I know what to ask you about, what have you been big in?"

The day got no better (he was so late to a big dinner of Jewish fat cats in New York—despite use of two cars, a helicopter, and a WASP millionaire's plane to get there—that all but a few had left), though for a time his campaign did. He built an excellent political staff while Muskie frittered away for months the advantage won from his 1970 election-eve TV speech. Bayh's organization was indefatigable down to the smallest detail. When the Nebraska Democratic Party opened a new office, rhododendrons from Bayh were waiting. Great Honk! Contact was the name of the game. Contact. Switch on. But then, switch off.

Bayh's eyes show it by August, 1971. He is in Dallas still saying that he is taking a few months to see if it's there in America for Birch Bayh, knowing by now it isn't. In October, his wife becomes seriously ill, and Bayh drops out without ever having officially started.

The illness is the reason he gives, but he knows he's made no impact.

It took him nearly a million dollars to find out. All the Democrats would spend close to \$5 million to find out even before the first primary vote in New Hampshire.

Harold Hughes was the accidental legatee of much of the '68 McCarthy support. He'd initiated the party reform effort, had made the nominating speech for Gene at Chicago, and spoken with honesty. Never mind the fact that this hulking ex-truck driver was also an ex-drunk. He'd make a great President, some thought; he could talk to egghead and drill-press operator alike. The first HUGHES '72 buttons popped up early in 1970. By fall, he, like many others, was traveling the country ostensibly for congressional candidates but also with a mind toward a possible presidential candidacy, though he never became comfortable with the thought.

It's the day after Bayh missed the dinner of Jewish fat cats in New York. Hughes is in Waterbury, Connecticut, holding a small group in a community alcoholic treatment center rapt as he deplores the drug scene in his Zeus-like baritone: "How the hell can Father sit in his chair at night sipping his third martini and yell at Johnny about the evils of pot," Hughes declares. It is a command, not a question. This is the issue, the problem ("a microcosm of our great national ailments") that has grabbed him. The presidential thing really begins to bug him. In a Milwaukee hotel several months later, after midnight, aides are trying to talk politics, but Hughes keeps steering the conversation to the drug problem. His white shirt is unbuttoned, and he keeps clutching it across his massive chest. He doesn't button it. It is as if the shirt were the presidential thing, and the chest the real thing.

It was no surprise when, on July 15, 1971, Hughes declared he wouldn't run. He felt he could better attack the problem as a senator than as a candidate, he said. His printed announcement made no mention of the fact that it had recently been disclosed that Hughes was something of a spiritualist, and had tried to talk to his dead brother through a medium. "We were about to pop some great endorsements," a dejected aide tried

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THE DEMOCRATS

to joke minutes after Hughes's withdrawal. "We had Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and John Kennedy lined up."

McGovern

It's a year to the day before Hughes says that he won't run. At 6:30 P.M., Gary Hart, Rick Stearns, and Kate Douglas tote three cardboard boxes from George McGovern's office (Suite 362; McGovern is very conscious that John Kennedy once had it) to a building a block away and open the first McGovern for President office. A month later, McGovern says confidently over lunch in the Capitol, "Oh, I think I can get 25 percent in New Hampshire." He, too, flies about the country that fall, purportedly for congressional candidates. One October night he's in Pontiac, Michigan. He warms up the receptive audience with the story of the South Dakota Indian medicine man who proclaimed that rocks he'd examined on a mountain spelled defeat for McGovern in his '68 Senate re-election bid. McGovern aides made it worthwhile for the Indian to return to the mountain to take another look. When he came down again, he said the rocks now spelled victory. The audience seems to get a big kick out of the story, but afterward a young Oriental stops McGovern and derides him for making a racist slur on Indians.

McGovern laughed it off, but it bothered him, just as many things would bother him in the months after he announced his candidacy January 18, 1971, saying that what America wants is "a way out of the wilderness." For despite all the tediously magnificent grass-roots organizing his people did, the tens of thousands who responded to McGovern's mail appeals for dollars, all his large responsive crowds, he did little better with the polls than Bayh had done. And he was all but ignored, in his mind, by the national media. This was hard to take for a man who viewed himself as holding a large share of the Kennedy legacy, who could never forget that he had first had the chance to do what McCarthy had done in '68, had he not feared for his political survival, and who lusted to be President ("Richard Nixon never wanted to be

President any worse than George," a former associate says). Perhaps, then, he could be forgiven for sounding like Spiro Agnew when he said on one TV show late in the year: "I'm beginning to think that there is such a thing as an Eastern elite press. They get together and talk with each other over a martini and they sort of agree on who they think the front-runner is, and everything then has to fit that mold." It was like a whine in the wilderness.

Muskie

Is it Scranton? Or is it Perth Amboy? Is it the fall of '70? Or the spring of '71? The memory blurs, and the notes are no longer clear. But it makes little difference. The Democratic county dinners are much the same in such places: raucous, whiskey flowing, pols and payrollers and their wives laugh it up while they wait for the candidate.

This particular night it is Muskie. He's hurried into a back room where the most important of the local pols are waiting for a little extra close-up elbow rubbing. It always seems in such places everyone's name is Eddie. "Hey, Eddie, over here." "Eddie, get me another." "Hey, Senator, what'll be yours? Eddie'll get it." "Hey, Eddie, put your arm around the Senator," the hired photographer named Eddie yells, "and put out the goddamn cigar; the smoke's covering up the faces." One Eddie after another poses, and eventually the photos will be autographed to Eddie from Ed. One Eddie makes sure a Maine lobster is present, which isn't surprising, and Big Ed promptly strokes its back. Suddenly, the lobster jackknives and stands rigid in Muskie's palm, hypnotized. "You learn this in politics in Maine," Muskie explains. "Geez," a bunch of Eddies say. "Looka that." The flashbulbs pop, and Big Ed looks pleased. But this is all frosting to Muskie's '70 election-eve speech when he comes right into millions of homes and says, "How dare they," the Republicans, for trying to feed on America's fears in that campaign. "What contempt they must have for the decency and sense of the American people to talk to them that way."

It was an electric moment in American politics, and if Muskie wasn't the front-runner in some people's minds before, he was after. And all through

1971, almost every time he was introduced to audiences, this moment was recalled. It was a moment that helped him withstand months of fumbled political opportunities, occasional dull elocution, dubious polls, dire financial troubles, repeated stories about his temper and caution, speculation about whether he was moving too far left or not far enough. So it was that when Muskie's granite face and firm voice came over national television again on January 4, 1972, with his official announcement of candidacy, the front-runner had already demonstrated a remarkable durability against the kind of attacks a campaign brings.

One sorts through the newspaper clips about Muskie's supposed failings, or the supposed failings of any of the others, and sees how thin the information becomes as time passes. One thinks about all the county dinners and fund-raisers and head tables and high-level strategy meetings and all the flying around and all the things a candidate puts himself through, and it all becomes so tragically comic.

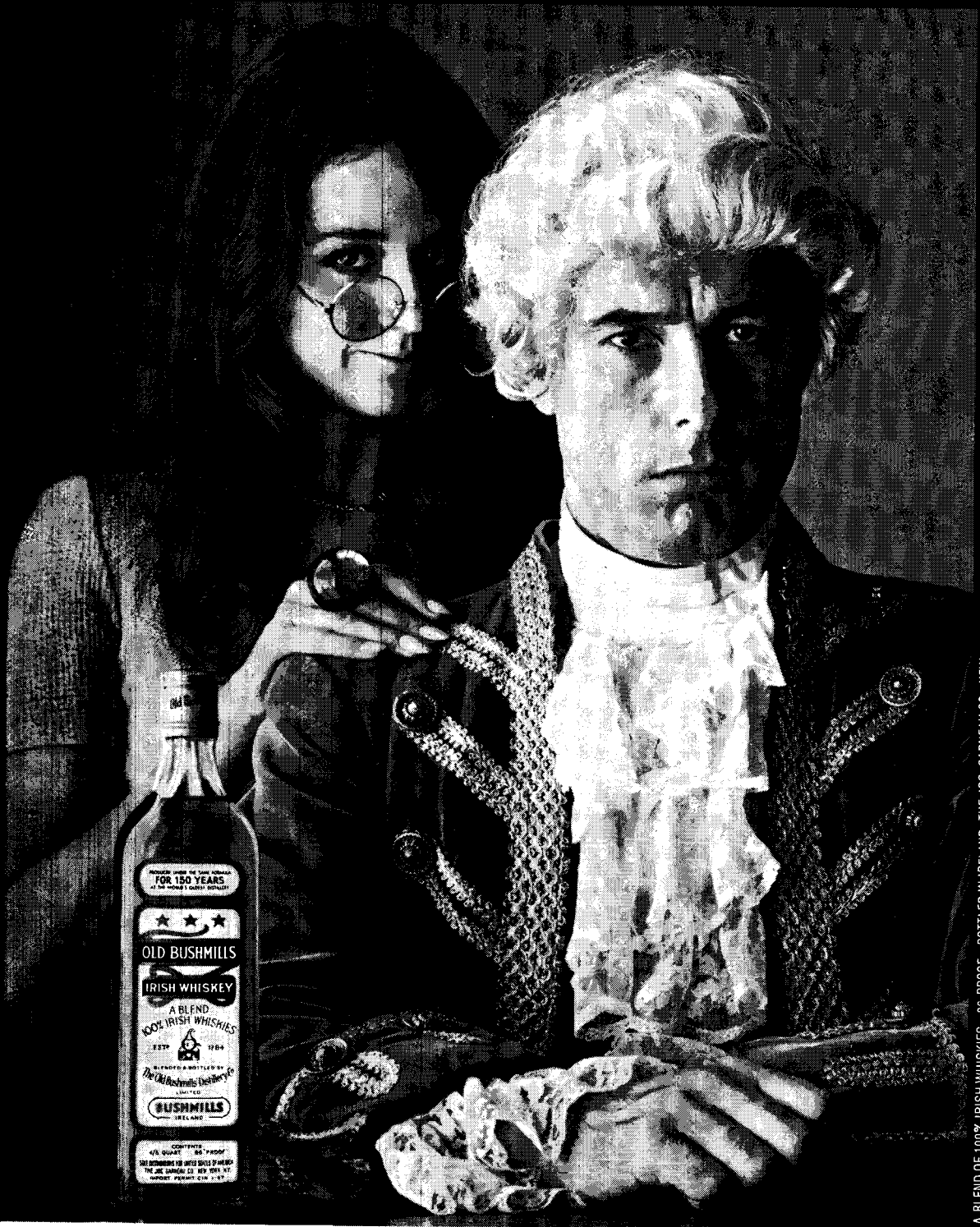
Harris, Jackson, Lindsay...

The candidacy of Fred Harris, who said some interesting things in the course of his run, was brief. Then came November 19, the Senate Caucus Room, the big place for presidential announcements. The lights went up, the cameras rolled, and Henry Jackson joined the pack, saying that he would move "vigorously" in such primaries as New Hampshire; but a couple of weeks later he declared that he wouldn't move vigorously or any other way in New Hampshire. That October 25 press release jumped to mind: "Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty today almost but not quite indicated that he may enter the New Hampshire Presidential primary."

The sound of the locust became louder: Proxmire will; Proxmire won't. Mills will; no, he won't, except for a little bit. Chisholm will; so will Fauntroy, in a limited way. Hartke, Hartke, Hartke. And this doesn't even take into consideration Aurelio's man.

It is July 8, 1971. Mayor John Vliet Lindsay of New York is conversing with John J. Lindsay, a Newsweek

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THE DEMOCRATS

reporter. Friends for years, they've gotten over the eeriness of John Lindsay talking to John Lindsay. John Lindsay likes John Lindsay because John Lindsay is a good reporter. (In Washington the reporter John Lindsay's colleagues refer to him as the real John Lindsay.) Mayor Lindsay is musing about maybe becoming a Democrat. "I've thought about it. Quite a lot," he tells reporter Lindsay. "But I cannot see it bettering the world in any way You see, I'm really an outsider to the regulars of the Republican Party. I'm an outsider to the regulars of the Democratic Party. And I don't think the time is right for a maverick." Did he think that maybe he should take the problems of the cities to America as a presidential candidate? "It's really a hell of a tough decision." Aurelio's man lighted another cigar. "I don't think I should do that merely as an exercise. And it looks like an exercise to me right now."

Lindsay went through the exercises of being mayor that day, chatting with Police Commissioner Patrick V. Murphy about the deft handling of a potential riot in Brooklyn the night before; giving awards to families of police officers killed in action in 1970; touring a methadone center set up on an old Staten Island ferry, *The Gold Star Mother*, moored in the harbor within sight of the Statue of Liberty; walking that night along sidewalks in front of the hovels of South Bronx, where a goateed Latin leaned from a window and shouted: "There's President Leensee!" Move on a few months, and suddenly, there in Miami, was potential-President Lindsay, a Democrat now, speaking not far from where he nominated Spiro Agnew for Vice President in 1968, telling America that he, too, was joining the pack.

Everyone seemed to be doing it. As 1972 arrived, some people even still talked about Ramsey Clark. You could still see an occasional SHRIVER '72 bumper sticker. Here and there in Washington you could find a button extolling Senator Sam Ervin. On my office wall is a bumper sticker that says, "YARBOROUGH FOR PRESIDENT '72." "When you live as long as I have, all politics looks pretty foolish," *Life* magazine quoted Charlie Chap-

lin not long ago. "Intellectual snobs," ranted Wallace, jabbing the Tallahassee air with a fist. Hartke, Hartke, Hartke.

McCarthy, Humphrey

It is late 1970, one of Gene McCarthy's last days in his gray-walled Senate office. He never likes to talk about politics. This day he diverts the conversation to the contents of a small box on his desk. Some rocks and two buckeyes are in it. "These are earth rocks," he says. "Genuine earth rocks. And these are buckeyes. They came from one of those trees over there." He nods out his window. "Not many people in Washington know about buckeyes," he says. (But they know about rocks. Hell, a good man can predict elections from them.)

Not long after he left that office for a hotel suite a block away, McCarthy, too, however elliptically, was running for President again.

Soon after McCarthy left the Senate, taking his volumes of poetry and philosophy with him, the gray walls of his office were painted a cheery cream, and Hubert Humphrey moved in, presidential dreams behind him. Ah, but.

Little by little, the dream returned, and suddenly there was Hubert announcing, joining the mob on the beach making sand castles. The torrent of press releases from his office (he eventually moved from McCarthy's old suite) became more formidable than any other senator's. He began running about the country as if pursued. His speeches were shorter, but he was still corny (how could he resist tossing a hat in a Florida circus ring?). Still sentimental and immensely likable, he rushed about leaving each minute panting behind him. "Oh, me, are we done?" he asked as one television interviewer (*The Atlantic's* Washington editor, Elizabeth Drew) tried to bring the half hour to a close. "We are. Thank you," the interviewer said. "Oh. Gee," Hubert Horatio Humphrey said.

Yes, he was running, spouting the theme which most of the other Democratic candidates were spouting as '72 finally came. It wasn't the war solely, or the economy, because the Democrats weren't sure that either would be bad enough to make things bullish



The time to start feeding your baby right is several years before it's born.

By the time you've started to knit things, it could already be too late.

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Actually, the rate of infant mortality *has* improved in the U.S. It has dropped 25% in 10 years.

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for them in '72. It wasn't necessarily misplaced priorities, though all agreed that they were, indeed, upside down. What it really came down to was C.I.—the Credibility Issue—which encompassed a general loss of truth, trust, belief, or confidence in anyone or anything in America. And, the locust liked to think, Dick Nixon was the Mr. Big of unbelievability. It was such a great issue because the malaise pervaded all America. Hell, when Madison Avenue latches on, can there be any doubt? Buick suddenly became "something to believe in." (Whatever became of God?) "You can trust Texaco," one commercial blares through a big production number that ends with the single word "TRUST" filling the TV screen. You can not only trust but believe in American Oil, Johnny Cash intones. "If You Can't Trust Prestone, Who Can You Trust?" Pink pad? Blue pad? Honest Ed Muskie who speaks of a politics of truth and a politics of trust? Straight Scoop Jackson, who's gonna tell it like it is? George McGovern, whose main slogan is, "I pledge to seek and speak the truth?"

Who why what where when how do I start to believe again now that to do so is so hard? A man listens, but the whirring of the locust drowns out the answer.

—RICHARD T. STOUT

MOSCOW

To an American newly arrived from the land of turmoil and the home of self-doubt, agonizing over the Attica prison riot or Vietnam veterans in the Statue of Liberty, and accustomed to the pervasive knocking of the Establishment, there is a startling and almost unnatural stillness in Moscow. Its streets possess the kind of law and order that the solid burghers of Middle America would envy, whatever their views of Communism.

To be sure, the Soviets have pollution, a generation gap with its own peculiar twist, and a tiny band of dissidents. They are rushing to embrace the mass consumerism, with its trash, smog, and traffic, that Americans are trying to escape. Moscow is beginning to strangle itself with traffic congestion and seems inexorably destined for worrisome highway death tolls and exhaust fumes. Yet there is surprisingly little serious talk here

about the environment or cancer-causing cigarettes, women's lib or gay lib or any other kind of lib that arouses or agitates New Yorkers or Los Angelenos.

Red Square is a picture of stolid serenity with its orderly queue of Russians, their passive peasant faces reflecting a patience bred of centuries and their voices hushed by the vast expanse. They are waiting—as Russians seem endlessly to wait wherever they go—for a glimpse of their entombed saint, Lenin. Along the sidewalks, Soviet crowds betray none of the restlessness or kinetic unpredictability that visitors encounter in New York, Tokyo, Bangkok, or Beirut. They seem almost as solemn as the somber, expressionless architecture that looms over them—"a noiseless, aimless procession through the blank streets and between blank houses," as the British humorist Malcolm Muggeridge aptly put it years ago.

Even Stalin, once the target of the most anti-Establishment attacks ever sanctioned in Soviet history, has regained a secure place in the political pantheon, and the Kremlin officially pretends that this nation never knew the brutal trauma of his purges. Khrushchev may have exhumed the ghost of Stalinism to exorcise it, but it has now been safely reinterred, as a round-faced young tourist guide named Anna explained to one group of foreigners on a gray afternoon not long ago.

Behind Lenin's red-walled mausoleum, she said brightly, were the graves of seven leading Bolsheviks—"Stalin, Voroshilov, Zhdanov, Dzherzhinsky . . ."

"Wait a minute," interjected a tweedy British voice, recalling Khrushchev's removal of Stalin's body from its honored place in the Kremlin wall back in 1961. "Didn't they move Stalin out?"

"Yes," Anna conceded, unshaken by that detail, "but the grave is still there."

Vogue

However orthodox and immobile the politics of this vast land, the mood of the marketplace is surprisingly bourgeois for a capital of the Communist world. The Soviet economy is still a curious hybrid of the underdeveloped world and the advanced. Clerks in big department

stores ignore modern cash registers at their elbows and click-clack away with the abaci used for centuries. In the Hotel Rossiya, a modern six-thousand-bed establishment massive enough to enclose a platoon of Hiltons, the miles of carpeting are cleaned not by modern vacuums but by babushkas wielding short-handled straw brooms.

Still, the face of Moscow is changing. The mock-Gothic, sand-castle skyscrapers built by Stalin in the thirties now share the skyline with new glass-encased twenty-five-story apartment and office buildings along Kalinin Prospekt, an eight-block showcase development that brought Moscow its first supermarket and a self-service cafeteria a year ago.

There, and along Gorky Street and Leninsky Prospekt, the shop windows display more TV sets, LP's, chignon hair pieces, fur hats, cameras, and radio-phonographs than foreigners expect to find—often at scandalously steep prices. The selection is more limited, the supply spottier, and the quality far less reliable than in the department-store cornucopias of New York, London, or Paris. And often when TV sets are available, china plates and shoes are not.

But the spirit of consumerism is in vogue now. In contrast to that aspect of the American generation gap whereby the young ostentatiously spurn the conspicuous consumption and bourgeois affluence of their parents, Soviet youth are in the vanguard of the consumer movement here, eager to buy, try, or even talk about the latest fashions and gadgets from the West, while the older generation worries about the moral corruption of too much materialism.

"Our children want everything right away," complained a buxom Bolshevik matron with a moral indignation that would have warmed the Calvinist soul of any self-made tycoon. "As soon as they get married, they want to have their own apartment with polished furniture. It took us years to get our own apartment."

"These young people," an astonished father in his fifties commented, "know all about Western jazz and the latest sound equipment. It isn't even hi-fi or stereo anymore. It's 'sound equipment.' They know all the latest makes and models—Garrard, Dual, and I don't know what, even when there is very little here to buy."

Other youngsters are starry-eyed about American space efforts or industrial technology. "Your computers are ten years ahead of ours," said a gaunt young electronics technician with open admiration. A black Chevrolet Impala or a bright red Swedish Volvo is almost always certain to attract a knot of curious strollers.

For others fashion is the thing. By Western standards, Moscow dress is somber, conservative, and distinctly non-mod. Maxis, minis, pantsuits, garish costumes, or bright colors—like beards, jeans, or pot—are as rare as litter on Moscow's well-groomed streets. Nonetheless, Soviets are better dressed than many a Westerner expects. Coats, shoes, suits, and dresses may have that stamped-from-the-same-mold Robert Hall or Thom McAn look. But they provide Muscovites with a practical, cloth-coat respectability that they lacked only a few years ago.

And the privileged upper crust, with opportunities to travel abroad or with access to the greatly reduced prices of special hard-currency stores, manage to accumulate not only modish wardrobes but also private dachas in the restricted green-belt suburbs to pass on to their children. One current fad is antiques. "All these items are from the Czarist period," said a thoroughly bourgeois dramatist in a beige turtleneck pantsuit, showing off her teak veneer dresser with gold handles and a pen-and-ink desk set said to be from Pushkin's home. "Ten years ago, we wouldn't have dreamed of collecting these things," she went on. "We were all trained not to want such things. But now it's the fashion, and everybody's buying." Her husband, however, was more interested in getting a Saco stopwatch. The "in thing" among high Soviet trade officials this season is an LP of *Hair*, worth roughly sixty rubles (\$72) on the black market.

But the pre-eminent symbol of Soviet consumerism is the private car. The automobile age dawned here in earnest only two years ago, but already Moscow's unbelievably broad boulevards are thronged with more than 600,000 cars—120,000 privately owned and half a million more owned by state agencies and enterprises and often used *na levy* (on the side) for a little moonlight cash.

The motor era has been thrust

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MOSCOW

upon Muscovites so forcefully and suddenly that pedestrians are generally in a quandary. Either they recklessly dart in front of cars and then helplessly stop stock-still in midstreet or else they edge warily out from the curbs uncertain of their rights even at zebra crosswalks.

The Zhiguli, the boxy little Soviet-made Fiat, is the newest, smartest car in Moscow, the only one with the polish and dash of Western cars. To get one, Soviet customers have to endure a masochistic wait of a year or two and pay more than \$5000. Some Russian drivers prefer the more primitive old-model Volga, a bulky, stiff-wheeled vehicle that maneuvers like a tank and costs even more than a Zhiguli.

"If you ever have an accident in one of those little Zhigulis, look out," advised one Muscovite, grimacing at the thought of the little car in a smashup. "But with the old Volga"—and he clenched his fist solidly—"the other fellow had better be careful."

"Exciting statistics . . ."

There is a temptation to assume that the Soviet Union is just another modern industrial state developing in its own maverick way the same technology, corporate structure, consumer urges, and environmental headaches as America or Japan. It is difficult to square such an impression with the unreality of Russian political life. The Soviet press, with its turgid, repetitive commentaries and its prefabricated slogans, is a spectacle that has to be read to be believed. Endlessly, newspapers hound the citizenry with visions of an uplifting march toward a more humane, plentiful, and joyous collective life. The propaganda overkill reaches its zenith at the November 7 Bolshevik revolutionary celebrations, when the entire city literally drips with red banners and *Pravda* is moved to flights of poetry:

Filled with glittering light,
Exciting statistics of the five-year
plan:
They are like branches getting green
On the white tree-trunk of a dream.

The effect of the pervasive propaganda is numbing. Not surprisingly, most Muscovites—often extra-

vagantly warm with personal friends—have long since turned inward politically. "After a while you don't even see the slogans," one Muscovite advised this newcomer, still overwhelmed by huge signs peering down from rooftops to proclaim "THE PEOPLE AND THE PARTY ARE UNITED" or "GLORY TO WORK." Being close to the seat of power, Muscovites are guarded and wary, and politically passive to a degree astounding to an American grown used to the politics of confrontation. Occasionally, outsiders learn of young intellectuals arguing with their parents over whether the Soviet Union should have invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 or whether Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn should be allowed to publish here. But the great majority of Muscovites mask their views most of the time. And even if the young talk eagerly with foreigners about life abroad or material shortages at home, older people have been known to shy away when a stranger with a foreign accent so much as asks for a two-kopeck piece for a pay phone.

Some Muscovites, cynically bemused by their own docility, tell the anecdote about a small boy asking his grandmother her views about Soviet political leaders.

"Babushka," he asked, "was Lenin a good man?"

"Yes, very good," she replied.

"Was Stalin?"

"No, he was bad."

"What about Khrushchev?"

"Bad, too."

"What about Brezhnev?"

"I don't know until he dies or they throw him out."

Rarely has the situation been more starkly unreal than when Khrushchev died last September. The Western press devoted page after page to the flamboyant, shoe-banging peasant who dared to denounce Stalin, pushed the world to the brink of nuclear holocaust, and then turned toward détente near the end of his eleven stormy years of ruling the Kremlin. But the Soviet press gave him only a single sentence—forty-eight hours after his death. And Russians took both the news of his death and its treatment in the press with astonishingly little show of emotion or curiosity.

"He was an old man," a pension-age professional woman said belittlingly. "When Stalin died, he

was still in power, so the press carried all the news about it. And when our cosmonauts died last summer, people cried because they felt terrible. But Khrushchev was largely forgotten."

With an unconcern that reflected the ordinary man's view that politics is someone else's business, most people mumbled briefly, "too bad." A few called him "a clown." A few others praised him for liberalizing intellectual life. But it was hard to find people expressing the kind of strong reactions that Dwight Eisenhower's death kindled among Americans.

China is near

This air of unreality envelops other uncomfortable happenings. In September, a Hungarian airliner crashed near Kiev, in the Soviet Ukraine, and forty-nine people were killed. Characteristically, the Soviet press carried not a word for four days until Premier Alexei Kosygin sent the Hungarian government a telegram of condolence. With bizarre dexterity, the telegram asked that condolences be conveyed "to the families of the crash victims" without mentioning what crash, where, when, or even that an airliner was involved. No one thought it strange that the press merely ran the text of the message without further explanation.

As a safety valve the controlled press carries and even encourages some debate on relatively harmless topics such as whether ballroom dancing should be taught in schools, which consumer goods are falling way below standard, whether entrance examinations should be required at universities, or whether pantsuits are immoral or acceptable on the job. But broad social issues like pollution or nationality problems, catastrophes like air accidents, anything which suggests that something might be seriously amiss are usually taboo.

The one issue on which press and private opinion seem to coincide is China. The great outpouring of Soviet diatribes against Communist China since President Nixon's visit to Peking was announced seems genuinely to reflect the deep uneasiness ordinary Russians feel about China. A Soviet journalist returned from Byelorussia, a continent away from the Chinese borders, and told friends that people there were worried about

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The New Centurions marked the emergence of a rare new literary talent—a working cop who could write. It was a novel, said *The New York Times*, that carried the reader “into the minds and hearts, into the nerves and (sometimes literally) into the guts of other human beings.” *The Los Angeles Times* observed, “the novel takes its power from the same sources which illuminated the works of such important American writers as Crane and Dos Passos, Faulkner and Hemingway.”

In *The Blue Knight*, Joseph Wambaugh confirms his mastery of the storyteller's craft. His Bumper Morgan wears “beat officer shoes”: size thirteen triple E, round-toed, clumsy, high tops with metal eyelets. They are old, worn, ugly shoes, but in the end he forces us to walk in them, at least for a time.

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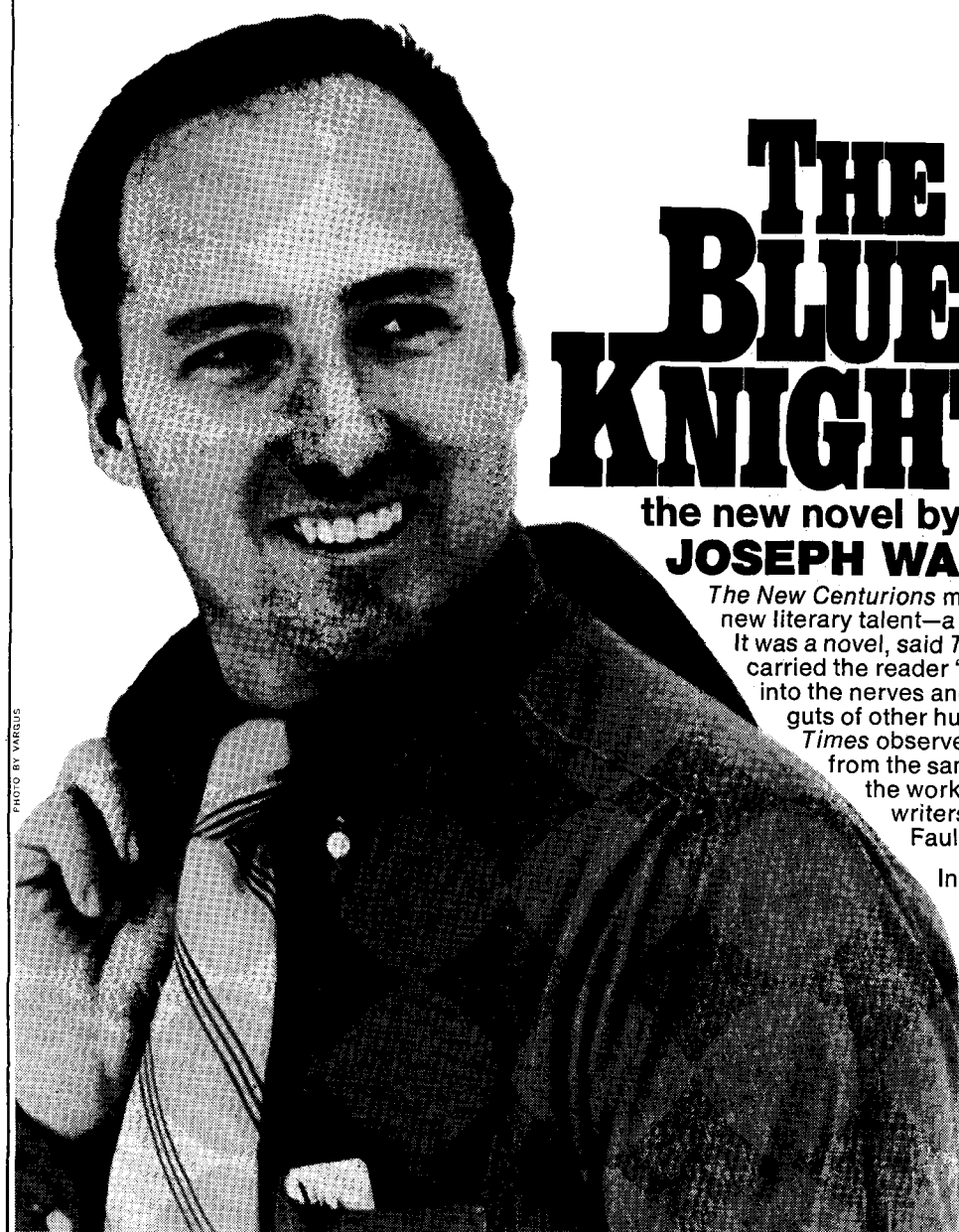


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a Sino-Soviet war one day. Parents in the Russian heartland say they would prefer to have their sons spend their compulsory army tours in the frozen wilds of the North rather than be stationed along the Chinese frontier—anything but China.

More than most Americans realize, Russians still nurse their grief over the loss of 20 million dead to the Germans in World War II. But that bitter memory is slowly giving way to the fear about China in the future, its sudden burst upon the world stage, its “collusion” with Washington, its growing military and industrial development, its inscrutable ways.

As the time for the Nixon visit to Peking approached, Soviet officials and newsmen took to warning Americans: “You are going to have great trouble with China—worse than anything either you or we have experienced in the past.” But it is evident that Russians are haunted by this fear themselves.

Although braced for trouble when Communist China entered the United Nations, they were genuinely pained and surprised by the vehemence of the Chinese challenge to Soviet positions on such issues as disarmament and piqued by Peking’s fiery charges that Moscow had instigated the India-Pakistan war. “It’s shocking,” said a professional man. “It’s very unpleasant. You read these stories that the Chinese are taking a very strange line and you wonder why we made all this struggle to help get China into the United Nations. Of course, that policy was decided long ago and it was kept. But now these things are hard to digest.”

—HEDRICK SMITH

EL PASO

BIENVENIDOS MR. VICE PRESIDENT announces the hoarding in the banquet room. The Sheraton Motor Inn sits on the outskirts of El Paso—rolling sandy hills where shopping centers bloom among the creosote bush and thrust the neon symbols of American consumption high into the desert air. Five hundred local Republicans have contributed to the campaign fund of incumbent Senator John Tower for a slab of prime roast beef and a chance to see and to hear the man, Spiro Agnew. The room reverberates with the clash of cutlery,

the amplified twang of electric guitars, and the nasal blandishments of the Sons of the Pioneers, who wear candy-apple red Western suits and gallop through an inauspicious number entitled “Timber.” Senator Tower, a short man, glumly confronts his constituents from the left of the podium (“He’s sitting on a pile of telephone directories,” jokes a fundraiser. “It must be terrible, being our senator and such a little thing”), but Agnew conducts himself with the intense bonhomie of Stewart Granger hosted by Watusi.

His audience—expansive West Texans with WASPish, suntanned faces warmed by the occasion and a modicum of whiskey and soda—anticipates his alliterative attack upon the “hydrophobic hostility” of his liberal foes. When Agnew is introduced, a woman with modishly coiffed gray curls stands and screams “Viva!” enforcing an instant hush that is followed by a mighty, communal “Olé!” as other party stalwarts wearing gold lamé gowns or narrow lapels in mohair and muted silk ties tip their chairs back and raise those strong chins for better, unequivocal delivery: more and louder *olé*s that bring the Vice President to his feet and crinkles of good-humored disbelief to the edges of his eyes.

Later, outside a motel corridor buttressed by armed guards, a member of the Secret Service remarks to an associate, “Those people act like Democrats.”

Passing

El Paso has changed. A decade ago a visiting dignitary would have slept and dined at the Paso Del Norte, a rambling old hotel on the edge of the business district and less than a mile from Mexico. The habitués dozing beneath the Tiffany glass dome in the lobby, Stetsons on their laps, may once have dealt cash in the cattle swaps upstairs; but today the business is restricted to a few big operators who still maintain offices in the Paso Del Norte. The money is in imported Mexican steers that are shipped through El Paso to points north. The area has never recovered from the overgrazing that drastically reduced rangeland at the turn of the century. Feedlots and mechanization have taken the romance out of what remains of the cattle industry, a pass-

ing most lamented by the cowboys. (“Even the roundups are different,” says one. “Used to be when we castrated the young bulls, we’d throw those things right into a hot skillet on the fire where the irons were heated. We’d eat them as we went along. Now most of the branding is done electrically. You can’t cook mountain oysters on an electric branding iron!”) The old bar in the rear of the Paso Del Norte has been closed and the main dining room converted into a cocktail lounge called the Depot, featuring “a Pullman motif.”

El Paso: the name suggests transience and new prospects. For more than four centuries, travelers have crossed the original Pass of the North, a groove worn by the Rio Grande—now the line of the Mexican-American border—between the barren Franklin Mountains, the theoretical tail end of the Rockies, and the Juarez Mountains, which launch the southward sweep of the Sierra Madre. Cabeza de Vaca, survivor of an abortive attempt by conquistadores to conquer Florida, forded the Rio Grande here in the 1530s, starving and bound for California on foot. Stories of gold and silver to be found in the interior of what is now the Southwestern United States brought Coronado and other explorers up from the South, and the Pass became the link between the Spanish realm in Mexico City and the settlements in New Mexico.

The inhabitants of the Pass—Manso and Suma Indians tending sheep and goats—were joined by Spanish soldiers, traders, and missionaries. The first *norteamericanos*—trappers of beaver living in what was then a swamp bordering a deep, fast-flowing river—didn’t arrive until the 1820s; they and the itinerant cowboys who drifted into the area lived under the Mexican government until the Gadsden Purchase in 1853.

El Paso differed from other notorious Western towns like Dodge City, Tombstone, and Cheyenne because it was more isolated and remained hazardous longer than the rest. According to a local historian, C.L. Sonnichsen, El Paso “won fame as a sort of rendezvous of hard-drinking, quick-shooting specimens. . . . In the early eighties, as the railroads raced for the Pass accompanied by a wave of desperate or shady characters, new legends of blood and sin

arose. . . . It was not until several years after the turn of the century that civilization really caught up with El Paso."

Today the city covers 118 square miles but retains the harsh physical contrasts of a frontier community. The manifestations of industry—copper and oil refineries, an eight-hundred-foot smelter stack that fouls the air on rare days of thermal inversion, an eight-lane interstate highway that plows right into town—represent a triumph over environment and isolation. The frontiersman's characteristics prevail: candor, friendliness, sensitivity to criticism, a willingness to uproot and move on. For many, El Paso is the happy end of a road that began in Pennsylvania or Michigan. Many say, "We just came out to visit Sun Country, and we stayed."

The twenty-eight retired U.S. Army generals who live in El Paso "are brought together here by the climate," asserts the chief of staff at Fort Bliss, the Army's air defense center and gateway to the massive White Sands Missile Range. Fort Bliss exercises the greatest single economic influence on El Paso. Established before the Civil War, it served as a base for General Pershing's invasion of Mexico and is reminiscent of a nineteenth-century pukka garrison, with rows of officers' homes graced with Spanish colonial facades, and two muzzle-loading cannon outside headquarters that point south.

Ailing Chinese elms have been pulled out of San Jacinto Park in downtown El Paso and replaced by shrubs and a geometric arrangement of concrete walkways and benches. The park now resembles the plaza of a prosperous Latin-American city. Shoppers crowding Main Street on Saturday are predominantly of Mexican ancestry; one is more likely to hear Spanish than English.

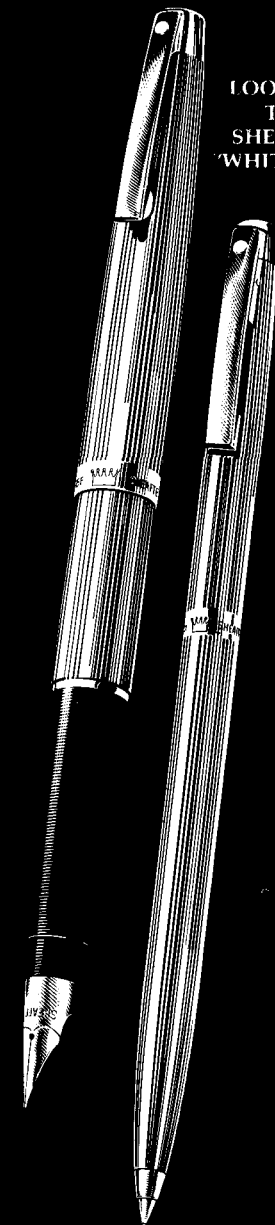
El Paso and the city it faces across the Rio Grande in Mexico, Juarez, make up an interdependent community of more than 800,000 people. According to Sonnichsen, during the Southwest's cattle and mining boom in the 1890s, El Paso was known as "the Monte Carlo of the United States" and thrived on land speculators, gunfighters, gamblers, and whores. But in 1904, the bipartisan Citizens' Reform League, made up mostly of businessmen and preachers, drove the girls and the dealers across

the border to Juarez. It was a day of "nostalgic regret" when "crowds of sentimentalists went from house to house saying goodbye."

Since that day, El Pasoans have resented the reputation of their city as the gateway to Juarez's nightlife. It is a sentiment that has carried over from the merchants and small businessmen who constructed the first bungalows north of San Jacinto Park to the thousands of adoptive El Pasoans filling office jobs at Fort Bliss or downtown and living in residential developments that spawn the new shopping centers, climb north toward the New Mexico state line, and line Interstate 10 to the southeast. Almost 75 percent of the families in the city live on less than \$10,000 a year; per capita personal income is considerably below the national average. Middle-incomers often speak of "doing" Juarez—eating *chile con queso* with friends, listening to mariachis, or watching a bullfight on Sunday afternoon—but would prefer sirloin at a restaurant like the Montana Mining Company north of the river, and seats at the Sun Bowl for a football game. The Festival of the Arts, two weeks of cultural events stressing the bonds between El Paso and Juarez, plays a decided second fiddle to the Sun Carnival, El Paso's own indigenous hoopla "spotlighting nationally prominent entertainers" (Vikki Carr, Phyllis Diller) and featuring the selection of a Sun Queen from sixteen Sun Duchesses. "Sons of the Sun members," proclaims the *Herald-Post*, the afternoon newspaper, "will have the earliest selection of coronation seating including table reservations on the main floor of the Coliseum."

Mitticism

Juarez Avenue, once the main drag of El Paso's sister city, is lined with shops displaying cheap booze, leather jackets, and endless gaudy "handicraft" (burros made of tied straw, miniature stainless steel conquistadores' swords, a bullfighter painted in bright oils on black velvet), walk-up strip clubs emitting the blare and skitter of cornets, small men promising myriad diversions; it is less than five minutes by car from San Jacinto Park. Juarez's prostitutes keep to the side streets, the saloons along Pig Alley, and the brothels; for more



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EL PASO

than half a century they have been a major tourist attraction. But the allure of Juarez is not primarily sensual. The city still provides a sympathetic environment where the suspension of late-twentieth-century disbelief is possible, at least for an evening; it has a wonderful *fin-de-siècle* seediness, part Toulouse-Lautrec, part Damon Runyan, where an Anglo with a little cash can play out most Mittyisms, no questions asked.

In the Bar Central, a traditional Western saloon with a long oaken bar and thirty-five-cent martinis, an insurance salesman stands drinking Mexican beer from the bottle and shaking dice in a worn leather cup. His Banlon golfing shirt is open at the neck, as is his companion's; his steely gaze rarely wanders from the ornate front window, as if Juarez Avenue were full of desperadoes rather than a gaggle of tourists from Kansas City. The bartender looks on respectfully as he slams down the cup, reveals another winning toss, snaps his fingers, and points to his empty bottle.

A dozen musicians wearing embroidered sombreros and spangled trousers surround a couple from the University of Texas at El Paso ("Utep") in the cavernous mariachi bar, engulfing them in soulful, melodious poetry about love and death. The young man loosens his tie, throws back his head, and releases the high, gasping shriek signifying that the music has touched him; the mariachis all nod in accord, strum wildly but with averted eyes, for they are watching a Perry Mason rerun on the television set behind the bar.

The Mexican government's heavy investment in the development of Juarez's eastern periphery has resulted in what amounts to a new city: broad boulevards and roundabouts, hotels and restaurants, a museum, and shopping centers all of bold and opulent contemporary design. The girls working in the craft shops and boutiques pay more attention to their lottery tickets than to the customers, for prices are fixed, and haggling belongs to the past. The area includes a track for greyhound racing, the Juarez Country Club, and the splendid Camino Real Hotel, once filled with gay divorcees but now, because of Mexico's rewritten, more stringent di-

voice laws, a quiet mausoleum dedicated to American marital incompatibility.

The Industrial Village, also on the Mexican side of the border, is an enclave of American manufacturers—RCA, General Electric, Sylvania, General Hospital—who are allowed to import materials into Mexico duty-free. They assemble final products and ship them back to the United States, where a duty is paid on the difference in value of the material and the finished product. The minimum wage paid to the Mexican workers is about \$2.30 a day.

"We're not necessarily a runaway plant," says the manager of the Ampex facility in the Industrial Village, while watching a crowd of girls put together tape cassettes in the antiseptic hall. "Ninety percent of the value of our product is in the American components."

Footprints

In Juarez, according to unofficial sources, about one worker in three does not have a steady job. A skilled carpenter can expect to make about \$4 a day without benefits, a common laborer \$2.25 a day. Unemployment throughout Mexico and drought in the North have driven thousands of destitute people up to the border.

Footprints in the marly bed of the Rio Grande point north. From U.S. 80, skirting the river on El Paso's western limit, Mexico appears close enough to touch, a diorama of desert hills planted with mesquite and the shacks of the *paracaidistas*—squatters who seem to drop from the sky and lay claim to the roadless frontier. I sit with two members of MACHOS (Mexican-American Committee on Honor, Opportunity, and Service), one of El Paso's many Chicano organizations, in a rented car on the American side of the Rio Grande. They wish to demonstrate the ease with which the international border can be violated, and have taken me to the riverbank so I can try it myself. It is early afternoon, the spot is in plain view of the highway, and one of the Chicanos grows uneasy. He says, with typical Mexican politeness, "Maybe they shoot you," referring to the U.S. Border Patrol; but his companion insists that wetbacks are no longer fired upon. I descend the bank, take off my shoes, flounder across twenty yards of

mud flat and through a stream of cloudy water no more than eight inches deep, into a clump of cottonwoods rooted in Mexico. The crossing takes perhaps a minute; the return trip seems longer, more exposed. As I top the bank of the Rio Grande, shoes tucked under one arm, my feet smeared with mud, I cause some interest among passing motorists, but no one stops to investigate.

During the ride back to town, the Chicano smiles and says, "They wouldn't have shot you, because you weren't running."

On Monday mornings the arching Paso Del Norte Bridge is aswarm with pedestrians. Commuters jam the walkway, pressing toward the Customs and Immigration officials with quiet urgency: students in starched white shirts and blouses, bound for parochial schools in El Paso, laborers in straw hats, women clutching purses and gazing in the direction of the El Paso National Bank building with stolid impassiveness. One and a half million crossings are recorded at the bridge each month; more than 60 percent are made by aliens. Thirteen thousand Mexicans in the area hold "green cards," a hangover from the old *bracero* program, that entitle the holder to work and live in the United States, though most prefer to live cheaply in Juarez and commute. There are also some 20,000 Mexican-Americans—best defined as dual U.S.-Mexican citizens who speak Spanish better than they speak English—many of whom live in Juarez and work in El Paso.

And there are the official "shoppers," holders of a permit known locally as the *mica*, who are allowed seventy-two hours in the United States to browse for the prized commodities—canned goods, clothes, and appliances. No one knows how many *micas* are issued in any one month; no record is kept of the time of entry of the shoppers. It is eminently possible for a Mexican to cross the Paso Del Norte Bridge on a *mica*, catch a bus or a cattle train north, and spend the rest of his life in Detroit.

More than two hundred men responsible for patrolling the El Paso Sector—360 miles of unfenced international boundary—detained 57,796 illegal aliens in fiscal 1971. Most of the detentions were made within the El Paso city limits, where the border patrol keeps forty men on "line

watch." They also cover plane and bus terminals and highways leading out. Smugglers charge \$150 to bring aliens across; a trip in a van from Juarez to Chicago can be arranged for about \$250. Some illegal aliens cross and recross the border as a matter of course, occasionally toting a bundle of dried cannabis or a television set, depending upon the direction of travel.

"For every one we catch," says an assistant chief of the border patrol resignedly, "we might miss one. Some say we miss two, and some say ten."

Jobs

Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Ray Farrell blames the influx partially on stateside employers "ready and willing to hire illegally entered aliens." Most of the 20,000 workers in El Paso's extensive garment industry are Mexican or Mexican-American. According to the production manager at Tony Lama's, the boot manufacturer, a worker's nationality "is irrelevant as long as he can do the job." For sixty years Lama's has produced choice cowboy boots in hides as various as cow, antelope, and shark. Lama boots include what are no doubt the world's most expensive boots—the El Reys, encrusted with jewels and gold leaf and valued at \$10,000 by Lloyds of London (the first pair was stolen while on display, the second bought by a filling station operator in Wyoming who keeps them in his office and charges motorists 25 cents apiece to look at them). "We've outfitted potentates, Presidents, and Kings," says the manager. "Boot-making is becoming a lost art; it's part of the Mexican's heritage. . . . The Anglo-Saxon stereotype just doesn't have the manual dexterity for the job."

One of El Paso's largest industries is the Farah Manufacturing Company, which in 1971 sold approximately \$150 million worth of men's trousers. Farah hires only "proved Americans," according to the president, Willie Farah. El Pasoans speak of Farah as "our millionaire"; he is a brusque, hardworking man who drifts through his vast plant in his shirt sleeves, transistorized monitor attached to his belt, indiscriminately referring to visitors as "guy."

"I believe in preserving an individual's rights," says Farah, who pays

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the basic minimum wage and doesn't employ union members. "Individuals made this country great. Other countries are eating our [the United States's] lunch by providing cheap competitive labor. Any American business that takes jobs away from Americans, guy, is a traitor."

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (AFL-CIO) would like to see the border sealed to cut off the flow of cheap labor into El Paso. But fewer than 10 percent of the garment workers belong to the ACWA. Most El Pasoans are apprehensive about what border-closing would impose on social services—welfare, schools, hospitals, public housing—if some 20,000 relatively poor families were precipitately forced to give up the economic advantages of commuting to work in El Paso from homes in Juarez and move across to the United States. The barrio of South El Paso—a square mile of yardless, one- and two-story dwellings sandwiched between Paisano Street and the river, with a tradition of tuberculosis and varying degrees of poverty—is already overcrowded. South El Paso is the focal point of the city's fragmented and largely ineffective Chicano movement. It is also the environment that produced Mayor Burt Williams.

The sole painting hanging in the mayor's outer office in City Hall, just a block from the barrio, depicts a laborer seen from the knees down, wearing a pair of laced boots and standing in a barren field. "Those boots look like they cost \$50," muses a secretary, while waiting for Williams to return from a speaking engagement at a local high school.

The man who strides into the office wearing a garland of paper flowers and announcing "I've just been leided" doesn't look like a South El Pasoan. He is tall, lean, and blond, a lawyer who speaks Spanish with almost no trace of Anglo accent. He plays golf at the Juarez Country Club and lunches at the Florida on Juarez Avenue, where he and his aldermen pass the dice cup to determine who pays. He spends little time south of Paisano Street now. The Chicanos criticize the mayor for not personally attending political and social functions in South El Paso. Williams' middle-class Anglo peers often insist

that he speaks in generalities, takes too great an interest in athletics, and spends too much time lobbying in Washington.

City elections are nonpartisan. The candidates, and the voters as well, are somewhat unpredictable. Though Democratic candidates receive the majority of the vote in most elections—even West Texas was affected by Reconstruction, and West Texans *remember*—the split is fairly even. In the last presidential election, Hubert Humphrey received just under 48 percent of the vote; Nixon received 45 percent and lost the other 7 percent to George Wallace. Mayor Williams' immediate predecessors ran as independents with Republican leanings. (The city's only housing for the poor, however, was approved under one of those administrations.) Williams describes himself as a good Democrat "and a liberal in the area of civil rights," a pronouncement which he would not have made so freely before he was elected. El Pasoans saw him as a young (he is forty-five) alderman on the rise, a professional man—from the wrong side of the tracks but not dependent upon the old money—out to improve the city's image.

"I want to change the atmosphere in El Paso, make it a *happier* city. That means better housing and better wages. I'm for revenue sharing; I think the money should come straight to the mayor. This community was deprived of \$15 million because a conservative East-Texas-type government wouldn't participate in the Model Cities program. I'm organizing a referendum on urban renewal; I'm applying for every federal program I can. And you've got to go shake the hands of those men responsible for those programs. El Paso is a *fun* city. We're in our infancy; we're about to explode."

"A good maid"

Late afternoon in Kern Place, a residential area in the Franklin foothills with winding streets and broad, manicured lawns, combines sunshine, tranquillity, and air so clear that one confronts the view without benefit of depth perception. A supper buffet in a ranch-style house of pinkish granite proves more formal than the invitation implied. The few guests arriving in casual dress suck in their

cheeks at the sight of long gowns and coats and ties. Even the mayor seems out of place in his white Western ensemble with its unobtrusive darts. He finds himself involved in a discussion of *Jesus Christ Superstar* instead of one about the Dallas Cowboys.

The only Mexican present is the bartender, who comes in late, without explanation, and begins to fill orders. "Typical," says the host, a well-brushed Yale graduate and successful businessman. There will be no *olés* at this, a private gathering with an unmistakable aura of transplanted Deep Southernness: the decorum and self-assurance of, say, Savannah's *haut monde* wintering in Cuernavaca, sipping margaritas (or Cutty Sark) rather than mint juleps, barely touched by the sound of platters of beef being laid out by other hands.

A Junior League member quips, "Behind every successful man in El Paso, there's a good maid." She adds, with a wry smile, "Senator Kennedy and the unions are trying to take our maids away from us," referring to efforts by congressmen to close the border. It is common for the women present to encounter a Mexican farm girl unexpectedly at the front door. Often she has entered the United States illegally, and carries only a paper sack containing a toothbrush, a rosary, and the snapshot of a child left behind in Chihuahua. Maids in El Paso are paid approximately \$20 a week. The arrangement usually includes six twenty-four-hour days, board, and a small room shared with a water heater. It is not unusual for a well-to-do family to employ three maids. They are a considerable factor, directly and indirectly, in the city's economy. The more than two hundred women's organizations flourish with the aid of a seemingly inexhaustible supply of cleaners, cooks, and baby-sitters (some beneficiaries do worry about the fact that their children grow up speaking nothing but Spanish). And luncheons, year-round riding, golf, tennis, and entertaining all require new clothes and investment in the amenities of unrestricted social intercourse.

No one knows how many Mexican maids work in El Paso; the Junior Leaguer suggests, "We couldn't manage with less than fifty thousand."

Many of the 1200 Jewish families that constitute what is probably closest to a cohesive and enduring aris-

tocracy live in Kern Place. The Jews have had a subtle effect upon the community for close to a century, and are heavy contributors to charity and to the arts (El Paso has supported its own symphony orchestra for forty years). The biggest department store, the Popular, was founded by Adolf Schwartz, who came to the Southwest in the 1880s from Hungary with only a bill of sale for a cow, which he used as a passport. He sold sandwiches and oranges on the train running between the border and Mexico City, peddled clothes in Juarez, and then opened a dry goods store across the river. He lent Pancho Villa \$50,000 to pay off his troops (who shopped in Schwartz's store) and was repaid with a boxcar load of silver bullion. Schwartz's great-nephew Albert, a vice president of the store, concedes that there are few Jews in public office: "Unfortunately, there is a certain stigma attached to politics."

An abiding interest in community life and a lack of pretension are "the happy accidents of isolation in El Paso," according to Leonard Sipiora, director of the city's art museum (We're the only place west of the Mississippi that has two Crivellis"). A native of Massachusetts, Sipiora has lived in Texas for eleven years and considers El Paso home. He wears cowboy boots while relaxing in a home known for its tasteful arrangement of art objects, and seems to speak for most of his fellow citizens.

"We don't have any racial hang-ups. Most people don't know what the word 'Chicano' means. People in El Paso are very natural. We have a lot of sun down here, we cook a lot of meat out of doors. The heat and the altitude conspire to produce a wonderful ambience—a graciousness. It's the Mexican's way of life, and it's his word. *Gracias*."

—JAMES CONAWAY

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Innocent Bystander

Evelyn Waugh:
The Height of His Powers

by L. E. Sissman

Nineteen seventy-two marks the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of a novel that nobody seems to read these days, a novel of breathtaking symmetry, grace, craft, and discipline, a novel from which many of our younger writers of self-indulgent, sprawling, amorphous fiction could learn the structure of their art.

It is generally and uncritically accepted these days that *A Handful of Dust* (1934) was the greatest of Evelyn Waugh's novels, fulfilling the early promise of *Decline and Fall* (1928), and that his career as a writer gradually ran downhill from there. There is some truth to this, but it falsifies the value of a writer whose creative life, unlike that of so many twentieth-century writers, possessed not only a first act but a second and third as well. The first act, whose theme was a dazzling, sardonic irreverence toward the crumbling Empire between the wars, came to an end in 1942; the second, more dourly preoccupied with the Second War and its fatal consequences for the English upper class—with the striking, farcical exception of *The Loved One* (1948)—ended with the completion of the *Sword of Honour* trilogy in 1962; the third, short and glorious, overlapped the second, including the brilliant *Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (1957) and the unfinished autobiography, *A Little Learning* (1964).

Speaking for myself, I would rank *Decline and Fall* and *Pinfold*, for their very different but equally genuine qualities as art, with *A Handful of Dust*, placing *Vile Bodies* (1930) and *The Loved One* somewhat lower in the scale. *The Sword of Honour* books would seem to come next, followed

by *Scoop* (1938), and such dilute and repetitious work as *Black Mischief* (1932) and the embarrassingly wish-fulfilling (though often beautifully written) *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) at the bottom of the list.

If you haven't as yet recalled the title of the 1942 novel this column is about, perhaps my point about its undeserved obscurity has been made. In any case, not to temporize longer, its title is *Put Out More Flags* (available in paperback), and it is the best record I have read of England in the first year of the Second War. In it, at the very height of his powers, Waugh somehow fuses the savage, deadly comedy of his earlier books with the ominous seriousness of his later ones. The abrupt and arbitrary rises and falls in his earlier characters' fortunes recur in *Put Out More Flags*, but here they are seen not as the operation of the author's whim but as a logical—or illogical—consequence of the war, itself a consequence of Waugh's upper-class characters' failure to deal effectively with Hitler in the thirties. In other words, this is the first of Waugh's novels to relate his people directly to history, to the worldwide consequences of their actions and omissions. It may also be the last; the *Sword of Honour* sequence, for all its sedulous following of the course of the war, is really the subjective, even paranoid, history of a single individual, Guy Crouchback, who feels increasingly disillusioned and betrayed by the alliance with Russia and the triumph, with Western assistance, of what can only be called "godless Communism." Because of this bias, Waugh loses his own objectivity in the later trilogy, turning characters who should have been rounded and alive into flat saints (Mr. Crouchback) and villains (Frank de Souza).

But *Put Out More Flags* is not like that. It rejoices in its author's skill at developing living characters, understanding them, sympathizing with them, however repellent they might have been to the later Waugh. Character after character from his earlier books deepens and broadens when faced with the reality of war. Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumpington, who appears in *Decline and Fall* as the sort of feckless student who might have inspired Sir John Betjeman's "'Varsity Students' Rag"—"And then we smash'd up ev'rything, and what was the funniest part/ We smashed some

rotten old pictures which were priceless works of art"—has by now matured into a serious, uxorious, quietly heroic young man who volunteers for the army as a private and refuses officers' training. Likewise, Peter Pastmaster, the son of the scandalous Margot Metroland, shows a new sense of responsibility, marrying thoughtfully—more about his intended later—and volunteering for hazardous duty with the Commandos. It is a measure of Waugh's art that we accept these metamorphoses of stock figures into real people without demur. But the greatest proof of his skill lies in another group of characters upon whom the larger part of the action turns: Ambrose Silk, Basil Seal, his sister, Barbara, and his mistress, Angela Lyne.

In Ambrose Silk, Waugh does something quite astonishing for him: he creates a detailed, sympathetic, understanding picture of what would, in his earlier (and perhaps his later) books, have been merely a figure of fun—a homosexual, half-Jewish intellectual who hangs out with the odds and sods of London bohemianism. But there is nothing merely funny about Waugh's portrait of Silk, who is immediately established as a first-rate writer and the unhappy victim of his sexual conflicts:

A pansy. An old queen. A habit of dress, a tone of voice, an elegant, humorous deportment that had been admired and imitated, a swift, epigrammatic felicity of wit, the art of dazzling and confusing those he despised—these had been his; and now they were the current exchange of comedians; there were only a few restaurants, now, which he could frequent without fear of ridicule, and there he was surrounded, as though by distorting mirrors, with gross reflections and caricatures of himself.

Nor is there anything merely funny about Basil Seal, the black sheep and remittance man of *Black Mischief*, who reappears here in deeper, more sinister colors as a man who "rejoiced, always, in the spectacle of women at a disadvantage: thus he would watch, in the asparagus season, a dribble of melted butter on a woman's chin, marring her beauty and making her ridiculous, while she would still talk and smile and turn her head, not knowing how she appeared to him," as, in his own words,

WINE GETS BETTER THE OLDER IT GETS. RIGHT OR WRONG?

Probably the most misunderstood thing about wine today is the vintage (the date on the bottle).

People think if they get a real old date, they'll have a real good wine. It's true in some cases, and not true in others. The trick is in finding out which case is which.

If you read what the wine experts have to say, you'll find that no two vintage charts agree. If you read all the wine advertising, you'll find everybody's trying to sell their wine regardless of the year in which it was produced.

Nobody has really taken the time or the effort to explain the significance of vintage to the public. We at Inglenook Vineyards are doing it because it's in our best interest for you to know as much about fine wine as possible.

After all, that's what we have to sell.

VINTAGE EXPLAINED.

Strongly contributing to the confusion about vintage is the word "vintage" itself. It has three different meanings:

Vin'tage means to gather grapes, press them, and make wine. So there is a vintage every year.	Vin'tage is the date on the bottle which tells you when the wine was produced, the vintage year.	Vin'tage also refers to a kind of wine. Some European wines are dated only in exceptional years. Therefore they're known as "vintage" wines.
		

The second definition is the one people usually mean when they refer to vintage. So let's talk about that.

In order for a vineyard to put a vintage date on a bottle, they have to prove that every single grape used in the making of that wine was produced during the year specified.

In Europe, the vintage date has come to be an index of the quality of the wine, since their weather is relatively sporadic from year to year.

And the sugar content of the grapes is largely dependent upon the amount of rainfall and sunshine they get.

In California, and especially the Napa Valley, the weather is amazingly constant from year to year. So vintage here has come to mean something entirely different than it does in Europe.

A date on a bottle of California wine is an indication of youth or maturity.



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WINES ARE LIKE WOMEN.

Some wines are in their prime when young. They're lively, raucous, fresh, and a little risqué. Others are best enjoyed in their mature years.

They're warm, sensitive, full-bodied, and mellowed by the years. What follows now is a chart to tell you, in our opinion, which is which.

There's no easy way to remember it, so tear it out and save it.



Each has something to offer.
It's the same with wine.

It may seem like a lot of trouble to carry this chart around with you to the store, or try to sneak a peek at it in a restaurant without the waiter seeing you. But we assure you the results will be worthwhile.

WINES BEST WHEN THEY'RE YOUNG			
Reds	Age	Whites	Age
Zinfandel	2-4 years	Johannisberg Riesling	2-4 years
Gamay Beaujolais	2-4 years	Chenin Blanc	2-4 years
		Chablis	2-4 years
WINES BEST WHEN THEY'RE MATURE			
Reds	Age	Whites	Age
Charbono	3-15 years	Pinot Chardonnay	2-6 years
Cabernet Sauvignon	5-20 years	Dry Semillon	2-6 years
Pinot Noir	5-15 years	White Pinot	2-6 years

Also, if you have trouble finding the right year for the right wine, keep at it. Fine wines are like antiques. They're available, but you may have to look around a bit to find them.

19??

Before we finish, you should know that most American wines are not vintaged.

Because, as we said before, in order to date a bottle of wine, a vintner must be able to prove that all the grapes he used to make that wine were grown in the same year.

This is a costly process, but we think it makes for a better wine. Because the winemaker has more control over the finished product when all the grapes are exactly the same. Most vineyards produce some vintage wine.

At Inglenook, that's about all we make.

Which is just one of the reasons why Inglenook is the most expensive wine made in America.

So if you want to get any use out of the above chart, buy Inglenook.

And you'll learn something from every bottle.

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BYSTANDER

"one of those people one heard about
in 1919: the hard-faced men who did
well out of the war."

Basil does well out of the war, up to
a point: he unhesitatingly takes advantage
of his sister's latently incestuous attraction
for him—the scenes in which this attraction
surfaces, played out in chilling nursery
talk between Basil and Barbara, are
among the best expositions of sibling
love I've ever encountered—makes
money and finds a temporary mistress
out of a scheme in which he must find
a country billet for three appallingly
uncouth *évacué* children, and earns
himself a reputation as a spy-catcher
for the War Office by turning in poor
Ambrose, now the editor of a literary
magazine, as a crypto-fascist.

But out of this apparent continuation
of his old self-serving career grows a
new character: suddenly confronted with
the imminent ruin of Angela Lyne, his
former mistress, who is drinking herself
to death out of loneliness, he does the
first real volte-face of his life by returning
to her, cajoling her back to health,
marrying her, and himself joining the
Commandos. This change of spots is
made entirely plausible by the grainy,
palpable reality of the two women in
Basil's life: Barbara, spellbound now
as twenty years before by her brother's
sexual power over her; Angela, rich,
fashionable, withdrawn, despairing,
preoccupied with death, an embodiment
of the woman in *The Waste Land* who
says, "My nerves are bad to-night."

Very few novelists can draw women
well; Waugh is a towering exception.
His Angela personifies all the vain (in
both senses) smartness of the years
between the wars; the waste of her life
symbolizes the waste of the old values
of upper-class England; her words when
Basil tells her, in proposing, that he
will be a terrible husband forecast the
future of that class and place: "Yes,
darling, don't I know it? But you see
one can't expect anything to be perfect
now. In the old days if there was one
thing wrong it spoiled everything; from
now on for all our lives, if there's one
thing right the day is made."

But the joys of *Put Out More Flags*
do not reside entirely in its major

characters, male and female, drawn at
full length; for each of these, there are
a dozen vignettes of people and places,
sketched, it would seem, in a second
with an artist's almost contemptuous
skill. Thus one of the most enchanting
women in fiction, the young Lady Molly
Meadowes, who marries Peter Pastmaster,
materializes, doughty and adorable, before
the reader's eyes in a mere four and a
half pages. Thus the fusty, echoing,
obfuscatory aura of the great bureaucratic
ministries of wartime London is caught
forever in a line or two, in a single
dizzying stroke of observation. And thus
a mosaic is built, a great mural embracing
all London, all England, on the brink of
the dissolution forever of its old order.

I hope you will give yourself the
pleasure of reading—in between the
often promising but unfulfilling novels
being published now—this triumphant,
ordered, perhaps triumphant *because*
ordered, exemplar of the art of fiction.
If I'm not mistaken, *Put Out More
Flags* is the greatest of Evelyn Waugh's
great novels. As such, it deserves to be
revived and reread as long as we read
English.

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Until They Found the Shelter, Their Home Was Danang's Streets

By GLORIA EMERSON
Special to The New York Times

DANANG, South Vietnam—He is a very different boy, even in this country where not many children lead safe, childlike lives. Vo Van Be is too small, too solemn, too silent for a boy of 11—although he does not really know if that is his exact age.

One of 24 youngsters who live in a bare, decaying, dirty house in this city, Vo Van Be very much likes his new home. He shines shoes, as do the other boys, to earn money. They all have tiny wooden boxes that hold bits of polish, part of a rag and a brush.

"He has a lot on his mind; most of the other kids have only themselves to worry about, but he has two sisters to support," Richard Hughes, a 27-year-old American, said of Vo Van Be. Mr. Hughes, whose home is in Pittsburgh, was an actor in the Boston Theater Company. He came to Vietnam as a journalist in 1968; two weeks later he was deeply involved in running a home in Saigon for "wandering children"—as the Vietnamese call these homeless youngsters.

If Vo Van Be seems to be a child listening always to voices no one else hears, the two small sisters seem even more removed.

A Child Beyond Surprise

The youngest, whose name is Bong, is 5, perhaps 6. She does not cry or often break her silence. Nothing seems to surprise her now; she only stares ahead.

Her older sister, Bi, has a swollen face and watery eyes that seem to hurt her in the sun.

They are by themselves during the day when their brother and the other boys go out to look for customers. Sometimes Bong plays a little with the big blue comb that all the boys seem to use. There is nothing else for shoeshine boys. The little girls should not be in the house that is at the end of an alley on a well-to-do middle-class street, but Vo Van Be has nowhere else to take them.

He cannot read or write. The young Vietnamese student, Vo Cong Tai, who lives with the children, tries to reach the illiterate. But there are not enough pencils, and nothing at all to write on.

Vo Van Be cannot answer questions about his past. The words do not come. Three years ago, his village in Quang Tin Province was bombed by American planes.

"Most died," Vo Van Be says. His parents did, but he does not mention this. He and his sisters took a bus to Danang where, for three years, they lived in the outdoor market, sleeping on the streets. Other shoeshine boys told him about the house and led the trio to it.

It is hard to understand why Bong does not have a clean shirt and why Bi cannot have the rash on her body treated. The answer: no money.

Dick Hughes, who is responsible for raising the \$2,500 a month for the four homes he runs, speaks quietly of his daily, monthly, yearly chase for funds.

"In the United States, people don't care anymore. They want to forget about Vietnam and kids like these," he said. "If you ask them for help, so many people say, 'We're spending our money for things at home.'"

Busy With His Projects

An American philanthropist said, sorry, he could not help the shoeshine boys because his projects were arms

control and birth control. A Congressman, touring Vietnam, promised to help, but nothing has happened.

Three American women, whose husbands are the highest-ranking members of the United States Mission here, dropped in at the boys' hostel at 195 Pham Ngu Lao in Saigon, and made the appropriate comments about Mr. Hughes's splendid work. But the ladies said they were busy themselves helping Vietnamese refugees from Cambodia and did not commit themselves.

"They did send us a television set—maybe the last thing in the world we need," Mr. Hughes said, with a grin.

A general has chipped in \$50, but the huge American community has mostly remained aloof. Mr. Hughes does not like to hold out his hand to them, either.

The financial situation in the last two and a half years has usually been desperate. Mr. Hughes needs each month about \$2,500 to run the Danang hostel and the three in Saigon, where a total of about 130 youngsters live. On one occasion, the actor even cashed in his return ticket to the United States to meet bills.

There are more than 44 voluntary agencies in Vietnam.

"They don't even begin to dent the problem in this country," Mr. Hughes said. "The voluntary agencies are tied down by regulations and restrictions. They don't want to go out on a limb, so they only support a successful project. They write letters to me like, 'Send us a letter from your president or board of directors.' That's a joke."

The Saigon companies of Esso and Shell—two of the world's leading oil companies—have contributed about \$100 each. The most generous and spontaneous help has come from the Foremost Dairies of Vietnam, whose manager is Stanley Pantell.

"In Saigon he had the electricity redone, the toilets fixed for us. Twice he's given us grants and even money out of his own pocket when I was really up against it," Mr. Hughes said.

A few American friends, some of them with voluntary agencies, have helped him face the crushing problems of giving youngsters a feeling of being wanted, of not needing to steal. In Danang, there is 25-year-old James Trullinger of Syosset, N. Y., who is the American deputy adviser to the Mayor of Danang, and largely concerned with social welfare.

The boys, who are from age 6 to 18, must only follow one strict rule in the hostel here: no smoking. Many of them, sometimes at age 9 and 10, like to light up a cigarette to show that they are tough and worldly. Few demands are made on the boys. Mr. Hughes does not want them to feel they are being "rehabilitated."

There are squads for doing the simplest chores: cleaning the latrine, sweeping the floors, washing the dishes, but any Vietnamese housewife would groan at the results.

The boys here own so little that it hardly matters. The one piece of furniture where they can put things consists of two relics from the scrapyard. The other piece of furniture is a long wooden table they eat, with two benches

thing—the basic premise must learn to care about the American said.

the hardest of all things to do. Some of the shoeshine



Vo Van Be, a Vietnamese boy, about 11, has supported sisters, Vo Van Bong, left, and Vo Van Bi, since their parents were killed three years ago. They now live in home run by American, Richard Hughes.

boys in Danang and Saigon have been pimps and pickpockets. They have been in jail as vagrants, and they are often persecuted by the police.

"One of the boys, Nguyen Loi, was stopped twice during the last two weeks by policemen here who wanted money," Mr. Trullinger said. "A policeman said to Nguyen Loi, 'Hey, stop right here. Give me 50 piasters so I can go to the movies.'"

But Nguyen Loi refused to come across, Mr. Trullinger said, and the boy was taken to the police station.

"His hands were held behind his back, and he was hit in the mouth with a gun," said Mr. Trullinger, who complained to the Mayor. It is not certain what the Mayor can do.

Some of the children have been hurt by the war beyond repair. Such as little Vo Van Be and his two sisters, or 17-year-old Nguyen Van Tri, who lost his right leg and half of his left leg when a Viet Cong mine exploded.

Some children ran away from brutal parents and refuse to go back to them.

There are others who have forgotten who they are, what they suffered: A tiny boy with a wide grin and long spindly legs has been christened Moritz by a Vietnamese housemaster for he does not know what his real name is. He is a Montagnard from the central highlands of Vietnam. No one else in the hostel here can find out anything more.

Phuong Van Nhan, 8 is a tormented child whose parents both had seizures of insanity. He ran away. When he talks, he cannot stop rubbing the table with one hand. Sometimes he weeps and cries out at night.

There are older boys who are heroin and morphine addicts; boys with polio who can crawl, but not walk, bright boys and slow ones; boys who have been professional thieves; boys who fight with knives, and boys who will, as Mr. Hughes puts it, never become "Horatio Algers." Mr. Hughes does not lecture or preach. He shares what they have, and he is always there.

"Once a boy trusts you, all else will follow: school, discipline, work, dignity,

and the difficult search back into themselves, as to how they can compensate for what they have lost and how they can possibly even be happy," he said.

Luxury Is Not Necessary

He does not think it would be better for the boys if they suddenly found themselves in luxurious surroundings.

"If the boys stick with you, out of love, when there are few clothes, few conveniences and facilities, and little money, the project is sound," he said. "Then the trust will last through the better, more affluent times."

The problems never stop: There are illnesses that must be treated, unbelievable red tape before a boy is issued papers and can be sent to a school to learn a trade; the struggle with landlords who want to raise rents, and the effort to give the youngsters a feeling of "family."

"After all, no matter how successful our hostels are, they will always be the second best thing," Mr. Hughes said. "Our sort of 'family' will have to suffice until some order is restored, until the boys can return to homes that are not shattered and at odds."

For two years, Richard Hughes has faced the crises almost alone. He knows when to interfere between quarrelling boys who have butcher knives, when to let a fistfight go on, how to gently caress a head and take time to hear a very dirty small boy tell him what happened that day.

Seven months ago, he hoped that he could pull out and let the Vietnamese take over, but it has not yet worked out. He does not really feel he can leave now. Years from now, he said, he still will not have stopped wondering how they are.

It has been worth it for him, and for them. Once writing home to his parents about the boys who have been looked on as waifs, criminals and outcasts, he wrote:

"I care very deeply for each last one of them. They are gallant and good. And I cannot fathom where all their love had gone before I came."

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For the **carton of cigarettes, become a humanitarian.**
Help Dick Hughes.

The New York Times piece above tells how Dick Hughes has given his life to the street children of Saigon. Many have already helped Dick Hughes. But much more is needed. If you can spare the price of a carton of cigarettes, send it to Dick Hughes, JUSPAO Mailroom/Saigon, APO San Francisco, California 96243. If you'd like more information call us at 212-972-0545.

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THE MAIL

CHINA NOW

SIR: I think Ross Terrill's Report From China (November and January *Atlantic*) is one of the best and most illuminating pieces about contemporary China that I have yet read, and I congratulate you on printing it.

EDWARD CRANKSHAW
*Sandhurst, Hawkhurst,
Kent, England*

SIR: *The Atlantic* is to be congratulated for publishing Ross Terrill's article. In many ways it is the best of the "Chou interview" series. Many of these are disappointing because those who have seen Chou know so little about China. This is not true of Mr. Terrill, and the whole article is a great pleasure to read.

PROFESSOR JOHN WILSON LEWIS
*Stanford University
Stanford, Calif.*

SIR: As one of your early contributors on the subject ("China Now" in *The Atlantic* during early 1927), may I send a word of appreciation for the exceptionally fine piece of reporting and analysis by Ross Terrill in his article "The 800,000,000."

There is a freshness, colorfulness, and candor about Professor Terrill's observations that make his piece, to my mind, perhaps the best impression of the mainland scene to have been written in English in generations.

JOHN MCCOOK ROOTS
New York City

SIR: I read Ross Terrill's report with interest and found it fascinating.

It vividly confirms my impression that the Chinese are ready to receive Nixon since he offered to come to Peking but that their policies are firm

and they do not appear to be ready to make concessions. They are waiting to see what Nixon will offer as they seem to think that he will have to soften his positions "if his requested trip to Peking is to prove a boon to him and not a liability."

W. AVERELL HARRIMAN
Washington, D. C.

SIR: Professor Terrill should never have said, "China never names towns after a great man." The name of my native district (county) was changed by the National Government from Heung-shan (Fragrance Hill) to Chung-shan (Middle Hill) in honor of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who was also called Chung-shan. In the process, we lost one of our more charming place names.

RODERICK ANYANG
San Francisco, Calif.

SMASH THY NEIGHBOR

SIR: About John McMurtry's charge ("Smash Thy Neighbor," January *Atlantic*) that there is a "strong correlation" between people who like football and people who like to beat up left-wing, counterculture types: On New Year's Day in Pasadena the stands were filled with Stanford and Michigan students who not only did not "relish intimidating and beating the hell out of Commies, hippies, protest marchers, and other opposition groups" but probably were "Commies, hippies, protest marchers, and other opposition groups."

HOWIE ARNETT
Gillette, Wyo.

SIR: That great sportsman Mike Curtis ("The Beasts of Baltimore," January issue) took the cheapest shot of all

time when he slammed into (blindsided, as these brave gladiators say) an overexuberant spectator who ran onto the field in a recent Baltimore-Miami game.

The spectator landed in a hospital, poorer by a \$100 fine for "disorderly conduct."

Curtis' conduct was more than disorderly—it was despicable. Some tough guy!

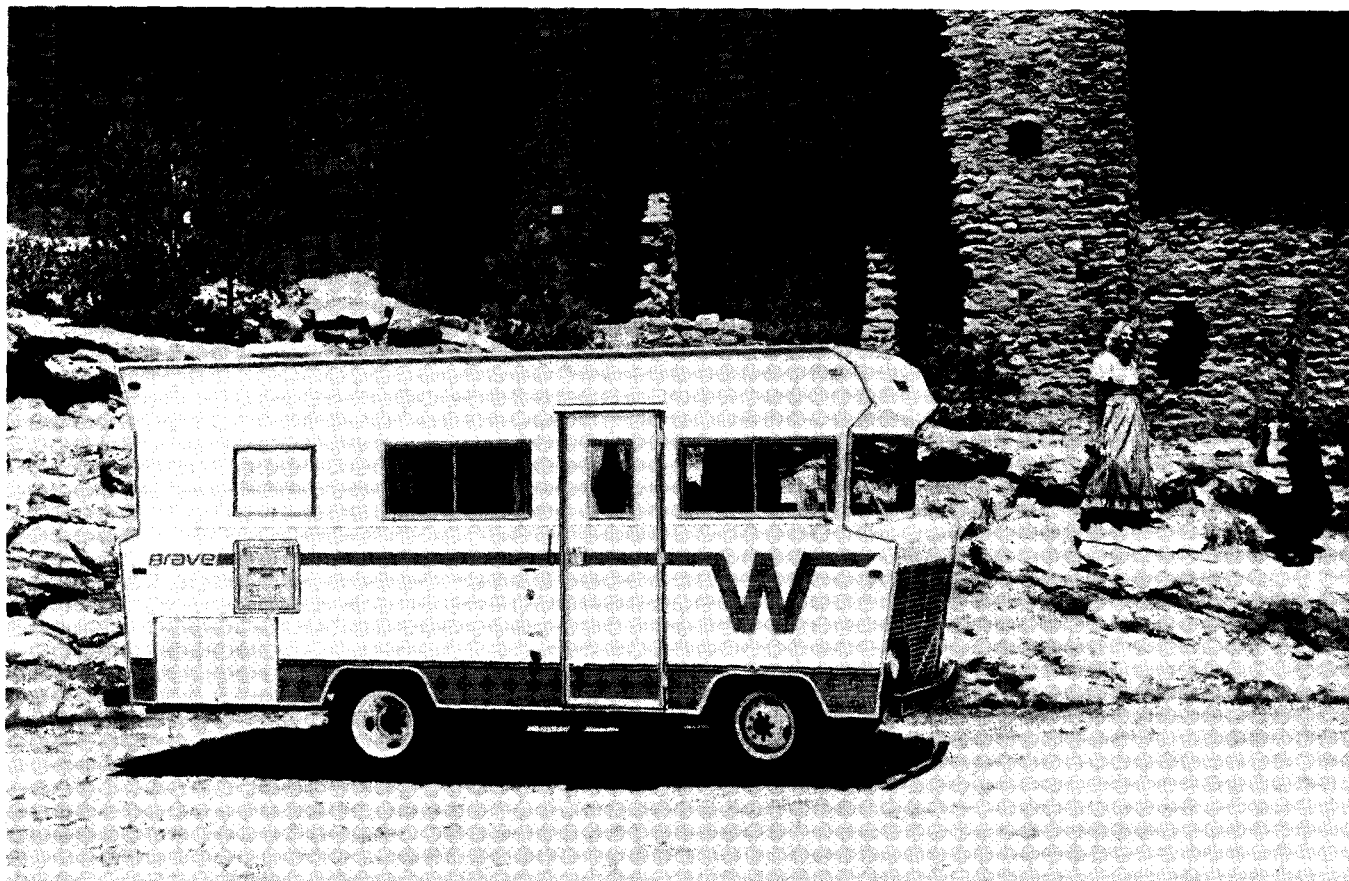
THOMAS F. CLEARY
Summit, N. J.

ADVICE AND CONSENT

SIR: The best piece of advice William McIlwain received at the Alcoholic Rehabilitation Center ("A Farewell to Alcohol," January *Atlantic*) was to put his drinking problem ahead of *everything*, because without sobriety, an alcoholic has nothing. In spite of this, he offers the lame excuse that, because of "... my own dislike of meetings in general," Alcoholics Anonymous was not an appealing prospect. Mr. McIlwain needs the fellowship of people like Mr. Wellington, Coley Thompson, and Tip Watson if he is to make a go of it. He certainly will not succeed if he persists in socializing with tosspots in the writing fraternity.

For alcoholics, the maintenance of sobriety is a lifelong battle that involves a continuing process of self-examination. That battle cannot be fought alone. As a "recovered" alcoholic, I have nothing but praise for alcoholic rehabilitation programs, but they were not designed to provide the help that is required (often on a daily basis) if the problem drinker is to enjoy a life of comfortable sobriety.

NAME WITHHELD
Chelmsford, Mass.



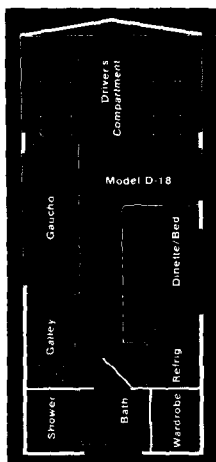
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A

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SIR: Most of the facts in the Sierra Club ad in the December, 1971, issue (page 29) are probably correct—I do not dispute the conclusions—but a googol is simply not the largest number of things that has a name. A googolplex, for example, is much larger than a googol—in fact, it's a one followed by a googol of zeros.

JOEL B. WOLOWELSKY
Brooklyn, N. Y.

SIR: With reference to Nadine Gordimer's *The Life of Accra, the Flowers of Abidjan: A West African Diary*, the Conseil d'Entente to which the writer refers is composed of five members and not four, the fifth being Togo.

JIM VEACH
Nuatja, Togo, Africa

SIR: Gunther Stent ("An Ode to Objectivity," November issue) gives a good summary of the main points and makes several cogent criticisms of Monod's *Chance and Necessity*. However, I adamantly disagree with his conclusion: "the ancient covenant is . . . breaking up . . . because . . . science has finally shown that in nature there is no 'truth.'"

Stent says that many of the subatomic and relativistic phenomena are "irrational." But his conclusion that man is therefore breaking up the ancient covenant does not seem to follow logically from this statement. When faced with the irrational, man's natural tendency has been to reach for the irrational, or religious, as an explanation. Therefore, animism and the ancient covenant would seem to gain support rather than lose it. Perhaps, instead, the relationships of these new phenomena are unknown, as Einstein believed.

WALTER MATTINEN
Odessa, Tex.

A correction:

The correct author of *The Wonderful World of Women's Wear Daily*, reviewed briefly in the February *Atlantic*, is Katie Kelly. The publisher is Saturday Review Press.

The Atlantic welcomes communications from readers, but can rarely accommodate letters in excess of 500 words. Light editing, for style and economy, is the rule rather than the exception, and we assume that any letter, unless stipulated, is free for publication in our letters column.

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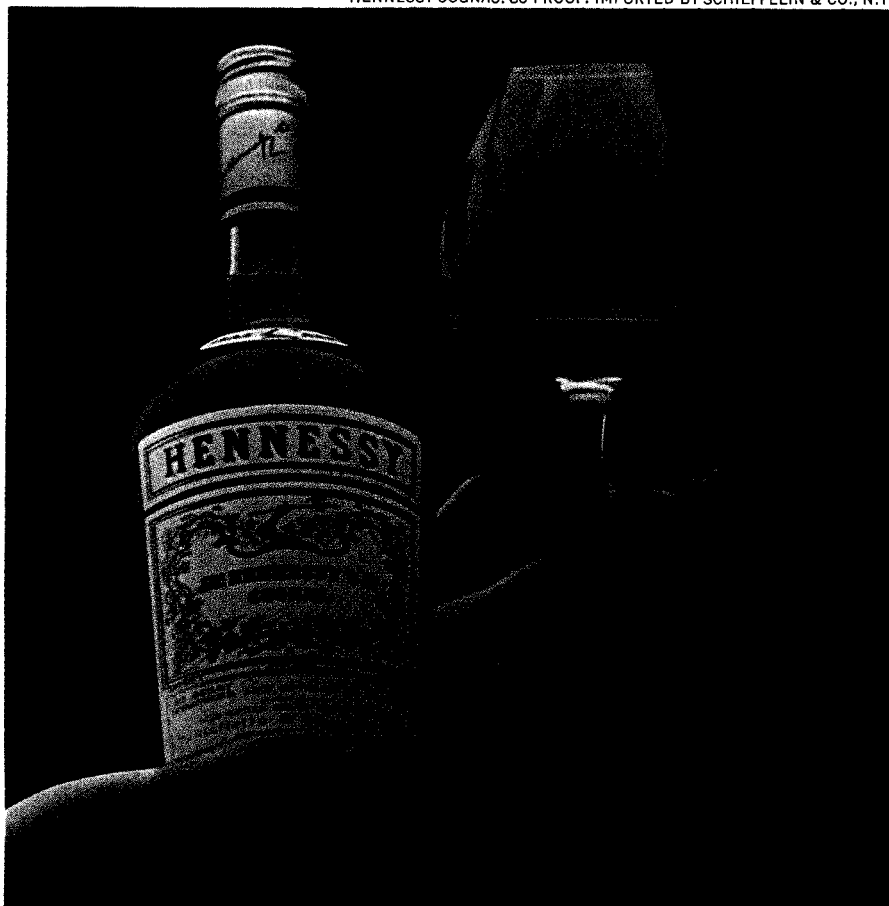
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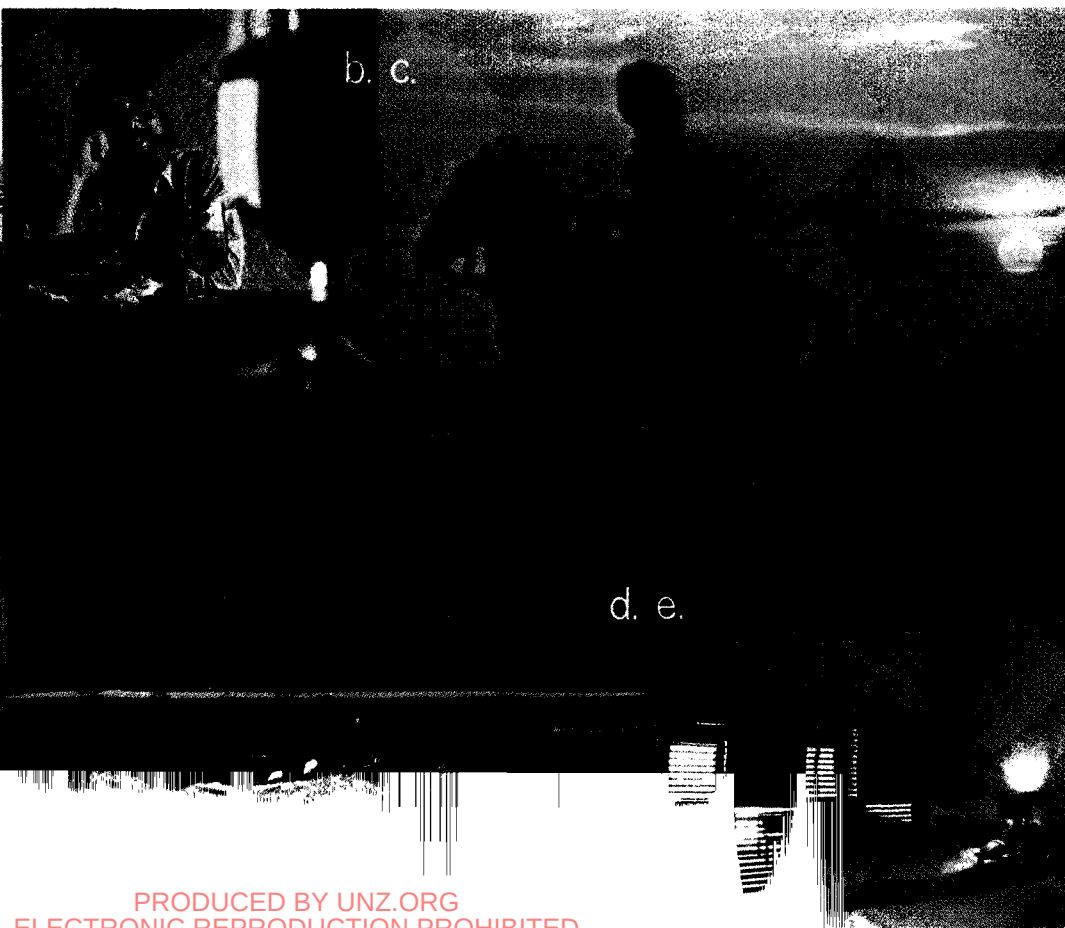
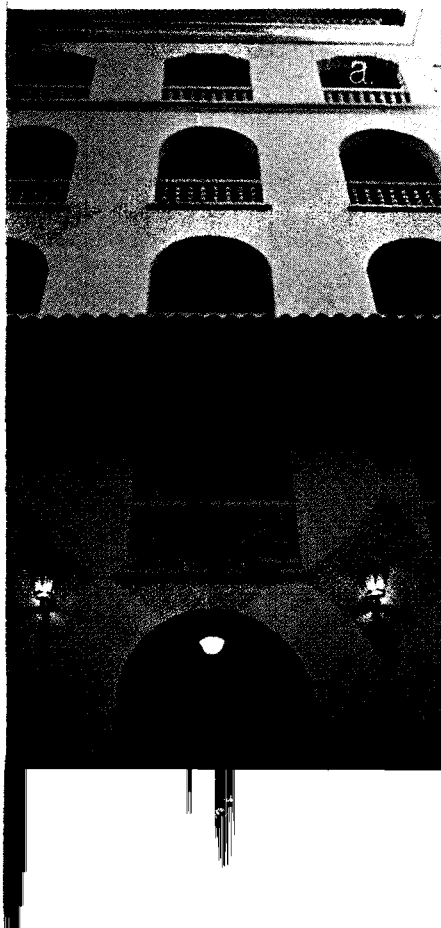
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- a. **\$13.50** a day for a double room in this Cartagena hotel. b. **\$2.50** buys a turtle dinner on the Island San Andrés. c. **\$0** (but give a tip) for a ride at a hotel in Santa Marta.
d. **\$2** for a boat trip (including snorkeling gear), San Andrés. e. **\$17.50** a day rents this private Cottage in Santa Marta.





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THE PARTY'S OVER

by David S. Broder

What this country needs is some unvarnished political partisanship.

The months leading up to an American presidential election are always a testy time. If times are even testier than usual, it is undoubtedly because the government itself is divided, with a Republican finishing a first term in the White House and the Democrats in control of Capitol Hill. The Senate is aswarm with presidential and vice presidential hopefuls, all trying to make partisan points at the expense of the Administration. Richard M. Nixon has lobbied for passage of the Administration's program, cajoling conservative Republicans to stay in line and seeking whatever support he can find on the Democratic side of the aisle. But despite cooperation from the Democratic leadership on some issues, the output of Congress is dwindling as Election Day draws closer and partisan considerations dominate.

The Republicans feel they deserve to be re-elected. They were called back into power three years ago by a public impatient to wind up a nasty war in Asia which the Democrats seemed incapable of ending. By and large, the Republicans have done what it was hoped they would do, although there is still a sizable American army in the field and no formal peace treaty is in sight. The war news is off the front page, they note, and mercifully, so is the constant agitation from and about the radical groups who want to turn the country upside down.

The problem is that the war's effects linger. The inflation which the Republicans inherited, though somewhat abated, remains a major preoccupation of Administration economists and average citizens. And the cutback in defense spending has slowed the economy and brought higher unemployment than anyone finds satisfactory. The Democrats argue that these are not problems of transition, as the President maintains, but the results of typical Republican mismanagement of the economy. This case was persuasive enough for them to win the midterm election, despite the President's and Vice President's all-out effort to elect a Republican Congress.

In the coming election, Republicans will run on the slogan of "Peace and Prosperity"—if they can reduce the unemployment figure and bring inflation under control; and if the protracted disarmament talks with the Russians do not end in disagreement; and if the tense Middle East does not explode into war; and if the India-Pakistan situation can be contained.

The latest Supreme Court decision on school desegregation is causing the Republicans some problems and jeopardizing their prospects for further political gains in the South. Despite the President's evident coolness to the ruling, his critics do not let him forget that the decision was written by the Republican whom he appointed as Chief Justice.

Richard Nixon is working as doggedly as ever, trying to keep one step ahead of his problems. Busy as he is with the duties of his office, he manages to take an active hand in Republican Party politics. He has to, for there are threats on every side. In addition to

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the Senate Democrats, who rarely miss a chance to denounce him, there are restive conservatives in his own party, unhappy about the course of the Administration; a Republican governor in his home state of California whose ambitions must be placated; and a millionaire governor in New York who, instead of resting on the laurels of a long and distinguished career, seems always to be seeking new worlds to conquer.

Since the last presidential race, the Democrats have made a strong comeback in the state capitals. They now control Ohio and Pennsylvania, among other states important to Nixon's re-election. But there is a friendly Republican governor in Illinois to help offset some of Mayor Daley's power. And there are high-level intrigues in Texas, whose top Democrat could not be more helpful to the President if he were a member of the GOP.

All things considered, Richard Nixon feels he can look forward with some confidence to 1956.

That's right—1956. This is history, not current events. Every item just referred to is sixteen years out of date, even if it seems to apply to the autumn of 1971. The President referred to is Dwight D. Eisenhower, not Richard Nixon. The war is in Korea, not Vietnam. The Republican Chief Justice is Earl Warren, not Warren Burger. The school decision that is causing the controversy is the original 1954 ruling that "separate is not equal," not the more recent call for widespread busing to end segregation.

The California governor whose ego needs constant attention is Goodwin J. Knight, not Ronald Reagan. The ambitious millionaire in Albany is Averell Harriman, not Nelson A. Rockefeller. The Administration's Texas friend is Allan Shivers, not John B. Connally. And the Senate Democratic hopefuls are named Kefauver and Gore and Kennedy and Johnson, not Muskie, McGovern, Jackson, and Humphrey.

But if this short catalogue of the similarities of 1955 and 1971 produces a sensation of *déjà vu*, an impression that we are watching a rerun of a not-very-good movie, then you understand what provokes this article. American politics is at an impasse; we have been spinning our wheels for a long, long time, and we are going to dig ourselves ever deeper into trouble unless we find a way to develop some political traction and move again. We can get that traction, we can make government responsible and responsive again, only when we begin to use the political parties as they are meant to be used.

Many of the shortcomings in the American political system today were foreseen by a group of scholars twenty years ago. In its 1951 report, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," the committee on political parties of the American Political Science Association said that there were four dangers to our democracy which "warrant special emphasis," dangers

which they prophesied would become more acute unless the forces weakening our party system were combated.

"The first danger," the report said, "is that the inadequacy of the party system in sustaining well-considered programs and providing broad public support for them may lead to grave consequences in an explosive era."

The weakness of our party system has made it very difficult to build and maintain support for the long-term enterprises we need to pursue at home and abroad. The task of supporting international economic development, of constructing a stable world peace, of building a strong domestic economy and equitably distributing its products and wealth, of reforming our governmental structures and finding adequate resources for our urgent national needs cannot be accomplished by a single Congress or a single President. We have paid a high price for the instability and weakness of our governing coalitions. Ambitious programs have been launched, but funds to finance them withheld. Commitments made by a Congress have been vetoed or impounded by a President. No party has been able to move ahead on its own agenda for very long, and the result has been years of government by fits and starts, with a mounting backlog of unkept promises and unmet needs.

"The second danger," the APSA committee said, "is that the American people may go too far for the safety of constitutional government in compensating for this inadequacy by shifting excessive responsibility to the President."

We have seen that happen, too. The weakness and frustration of responsible party government at the state and local level—which are, if anything, even more serious than at the national level—have sent most of our major issues to Washington for resolution. And in Washington, power has increasingly been stripped from Congress and the departments and been centralized in the White House. Bereft of the sustained support that a responsible party system could provide for passage and implementation of a long-term program, each of the last four Presidents has been forced to improvise his governmental policies and tactics on a day-to-day basis, hoping that some temporary alliance would permit him to overcome the inherent immobility of the vast governmental system. As the APSA committee predicted, this situation has produced the type of "President who exploits skillfully the arts of demagoguery, who uses the whole country as his political backyard, and who does not mind turning into the embodiment of personal government." But even the highly personalized presidency of our era has not managed to cope successfully with the problems challenging America.

"The third danger," the APSA committee said in 1951, "is that with growing public cynicism and continuing proof of the ineffectiveness of the party system, the nation may eventually witness the disintegration of the two major parties." That has not

yet happened, but we are appreciably closer to that danger than we were twenty years ago.

Popular dissatisfaction with the two-party system is manifested in many ways: by the decline in voting; by the rise in the number of voters who refuse to identify themselves with either party; by the increase in ticket-splitting, a device for denying either party responsibility for government; and by the increased use of third parties or *ad hoc* political coalitions to pressure for change.

"The fourth danger," the APSA committee said, "is that the incapacity of the two parties for consistent action based on meaningful programs may rally support for extremist parties, poles apart, each fanatically bent on imposing on the country its particular panacea."

Regrettably, we have seen altogether too much of this kind of political polarization in the past twenty years. This has been an era of confrontation politics: between whites and blacks, hard hats and students, demonstrators and police. The extremist parties are yet small, but the extremist movements are growing.

What must concern us now is the rising level of public frustration with government-and-politics-as-usual. For it is not just a few radical students who say and believe that the political system is not working. Millions of ordinary, hardworking Americans recognize that government is not dealing with the problems that are uppermost in their lives: crime and drugs and war and inflation and unfair tax loads and fear of unemployment.

For most of these last two decades, American liberals, of whom I am, I suppose, one, have been most concerned about the outsiders in our society—the black, the brown, the poor, the uneducated, the young—who are the all-but-inevitable losers in the influence game that we have substituted for responsible party government. But some of these groups have learned to beat the odds by ignoring the rules. If the "big boys" and the "special interests" control City Hall, or the legislature, or the Capitol, the "outsiders" have learned to control the streets. They have "voted with their feet," as the saying goes, and with their throats, and with their threats. And sometimes the government has responded, as it should have responded, to the justice of their cause, if not to the threat of disruption that accompanied it.

But today, it is not just these minority-group "outsiders" who are frustrated by the inequities of our society and the laggard performance of our political-governmental system. Millions of middle-aged, middle-class white working Americans are coming to understand that they have been victimized by the irresponsible politics of the recent era. No one asked them if they wanted their sons to fight in Vietnam; no one asked them if they wanted to gamble their

family security on their ability to keep one step ahead of inflation; no one asked them if they wanted to swap token cuts in their income taxes for walloping hikes in the property taxes on their homes.

Yet all these things have been done to them by their government, and they are not going to take it lying down. Failing any means of registering their views through the political system, they will follow the blacks and the students and the other minority groups into the streets. And confrontation politics—with its constant threat of violence and repression—will increase.

Is there not a better way to resolve our differences, to move ahead on our common problems? I believe there is. The instrument available to us is responsible party government. The alternative to making policy in the streets is to make it in the voting booth. But if that proposition is to be more than a cliché, there must be real choices presented at election time—choices involving more than a selection between two sincere-sounding, photogenic graduates of some campaign consultant's academy of political and dramatic arts. The candidates must come to the voters with programs that are comprehensible and relevant to our problems; and they must have the kind of backing that makes it possible for them to act on their pledges once in office.

The only instrument I know of that can nominate such candidates, commit them to a program, and give them the leverage and alliances in government that can enable them to keep their promises is the political party. But even as I say this, I recognize that the notion will be greeted with enormous skepticism. The parties, it will be said, have been around for years; if they are the answer, then why do we have the problems we have now?

My reply, of course, is that we have not seen responsible party government in this country—in Washington or in most states and cities—in the sixteen years I have been covering national politics. Instead, we have fractured, irresponsible nonparty government, and we have paid a fearful price for it.

The most serious and costly consequences of the breakdown of responsible party government are not in the domestic field. If one wants to sum up in one word what can happen in the absence of responsible party government, that word is "Vietnam."

For twenty-five years, respectable opinion in this country has held that the great questions of foreign policy should be kept sacred and inviolate, far removed from the sordid considerations of partisan advantage. The notion had a specific historical justification. In 1946, when Democrat Harry Truman was President, the Republicans captured Congress in an election that represented a strong public reaction against the wartime controls associated with the Democratic Administration.

The Republican congressional victory made responsible party government impossible. Faced with the necessity of securing support from a Republican

Congress for major postwar international policies—including the Marshall Plan—Truman entrusted his foreign policy to a group of successful lawyers and businessmen, many of them liberal Republicans from the New York Establishment. The prominence given such men as Robert Lovett, Paul Hoffman, John McCloy, Allen and John Foster Dulles facilitated the course of bipartisanship that was necessary under the historical circumstances.

Unfortunately, the notion became permanently enshrined that such nonpolitical men had a natural right to manage the nation's foreign policy. Dwight D. Eisenhower was imbued with the myth of bipartisanship, and he let the Dulles brothers run foreign policy for him. And as John Kenneth Galbraith has noted, even when the Democrats returned to power in 1961, "instead of Adlai Stevenson, W. Averell Harriman or J. W. Fulbright, with their Democratic party associations," John Kennedy gave the key international security jobs to such nonpolitical Establishment men as Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, Roswell Gilpatric, and the Bundy brothers, McGeorge and William.

"Foreign policy was thus removed from the influence of party politics . . . from the influence of men who had any personal stake in the future of the Democratic party, the President apart," Galbraith noted. Elections are held and party control of the presidency shifts, but the technicians and "experts"—the Walt Rostows and Henry Kissingers—never seem to lose their grip on the foreign policy machinery.

When protest over foreign policy arises from the ranks of the President's party—as it did from some Democratic senators in the Lyndon Johnson years and has from some Republican legislators since Richard Nixon has been in office—it is the nonpolitical "experts" in the key foreign policy jobs who always rush forward to defend existing policies.

It is these men—with their marvelous self-confidence and their well-developed contempt for politicians and public opinion—who wrote the clever scenarios and the cynical memoranda that make up the history of Vietnam policy under three Administrations contained in the Pentagon Papers. It is they who stand ready to advise a President on how he can dupe the Congress and the public and maneuver the nation into war without disclosing his intentions.

Why have they been able to maintain their control over foreign policy? Because the political parties, at critical junctures, have failed to meet their responsibilities. In none of the national elections during the whole course of the escalation and de-escalation in Vietnam were the American people given a choice of defined, coherent policies toward the struggle in Indochina. The issue was either ignored entirely or smothered in a blanket of bipartisan generalities. For six long years—between 1964 and 1970—the leadership of both parties in Congress failed to try to bring a policy declaration on Vietnam to a vote.

Vietnam is a classic instance of the costliness of

isolating a basic foreign policy question from examination in partisan, political debate. It is a terrible measure of the failure of responsible party government in our time.

The habit of partisanship, once lost, may be very difficult to regain. If that proves to be the case, and if the young people entering the electorate remain as independent of the party system as they now appear to be, the major parties may no longer enjoy a monopoly on high office. Three or four or half a dozen serious presidential candidates may run each year, posing a constitutional crisis whether we are operating under the existing electoral-college system or a plan for direct election of the President. More minor-party or independent candidates may find their way into Congress, weakening the existing party structure there.

If the distrust of politicians and parties continues to grow, it may be reflected in the deliberate crippling of responsible leadership, by dividing the branches of government between the parties and by turning officeholders out as soon as they show signs of amassing any significant power. While the masses of alienated voters use these tactics to cripple government, the activists for one cause or another may continue to press their demands through confrontation tactics—lawsuits, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and the other weapons in their arsenal. The result would be an increase of domestic turbulence and violence.

I do not think it is inevitable that we go down this road, but I am afraid that there is as yet no widespread understanding that this is what we face, unless we make a deliberate effort to reinvigorate our political party system. There is as yet no broad appreciation of the fact that the aggravations and frustrations each of us feels are part of a single crisis—the malfunctioning of our governmental-political system. We still delude ourselves by thinking we can treat the symptoms and ignore the cause. If we find ourselves stuck in a traffic jam every morning, we start for work fifteen minutes earlier in futile hopes of beating the crowd. If the cities become unsafe, we take our businesses and our families to the suburbs, hoping the problems will not follow us. If we find ourselves as a nation fighting a lengthy, undeclared war, our "solution" is to pull the troops out and hope it will not happen again.

For a long time, we have tried to buy time by this kind of retreat from reality, but we cannot play the game much longer. Unless our basic population patterns are reversed, most of us will find ourselves living in a compact mass of humanity in one of the concentrated metropolitan clusters, where we will have only the choice of trying to solve our problems on a community basis or attempting to survive by the law of the jungle. When the time comes—and it is not that far off—when most Americans live constantly

with the threat of breakdowns that have plagued New York City residents in recent years, when teachers and policemen and sanitation workers and subway and bus and taxi operators strike, when taxes rise while municipal services deteriorate, and filth piles up in the streets, when jobs become more scarce and inaccessible and welfare rolls soar while schools turn out more addicts than graduates, when personal security is no greater than one's own strength or weapons provide, then we may recognize that we face a genuine crisis of government.

If we are very fortunate at that moment, we may find leadership in one party or the other that can mobilize the national will through democratic means to confront what may by then be an almost overwhelming challenge. In our desperation, we may by our ballots give that party a mandate for governing commensurate to its task, and we may even be fortunate enough to find its leaders responsible and responsive in office. My guess is that if we find such leadership, it will come, not from the Senate, but from that most scorned of political offices, the governorship. The best hope I can see for the short term is that one of the major states may provide a showcase example of responsible party government in action—with a governor, a legislature, and a party leadership successfully working in tandem to meet the urgent needs of that state. Such a demonstration would not only validate the concept of responsible party government, it might also elevate its practitioner to the presidency.

Out there is a darker possibility that we cannot overlook. When frustration reaches the breaking point, when inflation and economic uncertainty, work stoppages, civil disturbances, crime, drugs, and the breakdown of public services can no longer be tolerated, a different sort of man with a different solution may present himself.

A plausible demagogue may appear and say, "Give me power and I will make things work again. I will restore order to your lives. I will see that there is discipline again. I will make the streets safe, and I will remove those who are disturbing our peace of mind. It may not be pleasant, but I promise you it will be effective. If those demonstrators try to tie up our cities, my police will know how to deal with them so they will not try again. If those unions try to raise wages, my men will see to it that there are no more strikes. We will control prices, even if it means we have to run those big businesses ourselves. Congress will pass the necessary laws, because its members will understand that it will not be wise for them to go home unless they act. And the press will cooperate with us, and stop its carping and sniping, if it understands what is good for it. And we will save our country"—but, of course, destroy freedom and democracy in the process.

That possibility sounds like scare talk. Some will

dismiss it as apocalyptic nonsense. But things have been happening in this country that I would not have believed when I came to Washington sixteen years and four Presidents ago. I have seen a President and his brother, a presidential candidate, murdered by assassins. I have seen the Capitol of the United States blasted by explosives on one occasion, and ringed by arson fires on another. I have circled our national monuments in an airplane carrying the Vice President of the United States and watched the tears in his eyes as he saw the magnificent capital city set to the torch by its black residents, venting their rage and frustration at the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. Time and again, I have heard from the Capitol, and lately even from the White House, powerful men speak as if they did not understand that unless we obliterate the tragic heritage of slavery, it will obliterate us.

I have seen speakers shouted down and heckled into silence by student mobs at our oldest university, and I have seen police in a dozen cities use their clubs with savage delight on the heads and arms and backs of peaceful demonstrators.

Above all, I have heard the conversations of hundreds of average Americans, who see their world, their plans, their hopes crumbling, and do not know where to turn. I cannot forget a doctor's widow in Richmond whom I interviewed in 1970 saying: "You can't tell from day to day, but if it doesn't do better than it is now, it won't be much of a country. This is the saddest situation I've ever seen. I've seen this country go through four wars and a depression, and this is the worst."

Where do we turn? To ourselves. Obviously, that must be the answer. There is no solution for America except what we Americans devise. I believe that we have the instrument at hand, in the party system, that can break the long and costly impasse in our government. But it is up to us to decide whether to use it.

What would it entail on our part if we determined to attempt responsible party government? First, it would mean giving strong public support to reform efforts, which in the recent past have been carried on entirely by a small group of concerned political insiders, aimed at strengthening the machinery of political parties and government. Here are some of these reforms:

- We should seek to strengthen the liaison between the presidency and Congress, on a mutual basis, and between the presidency and the heads of state and local government.
- We should elect the President in the same way we elect all other officials, by direct vote of his constituents, with the high man winning.
- We should expand the role and responsibilities of the party caucuses and the party leaders in Congress.

The caucus should choose the floor leaders and policy committee members, the legislative committee chairmen and committee members, not on the basis of seniority, but on the basis of ability and commitment to the party program. That leadership ought to be held accountable for bringing legislation to which the party is committed to a floor vote in orderly and timely fashion, with adequate opportunity for debate and particularly for consideration of opposition party alternatives. But procedures for due consideration should not justify devices like the filibuster, which prevent the majority party from bringing its measures to a final vote.

- In state government, we need to reduce the number of elected officials, to provide governors with adequate tenure and staff to meet their responsibilities, and particularly to strengthen the legislature by limiting its size and by improving its pay, its facilities, and its staffing, and by recognizing that it has a full-time job to do each year.

- In local government, too, we need to reduce drastically the number of elected officials and to make sure that the jurisdictions they serve are large enough to provide a base for two-party competition and to bring resources, together with problems, along a broad enough front to give some hope of effective action.

- We need to take every possible measure to strengthen the presidential nominating convention as the key device for making the parties responsible. The current effort to open the Democratic delegate-selection process to wider public participation is a promising start, and its emphasis on the congressional district nominating convention offers corollary benefits for integrating congressional and presidential constituencies. Both parties should experiment with devices for putting heavier emphasis on the platform-writing phase of the convention's work, including the possibility of a separate convention following the nomination, where the party's officeholders and candidates debate the program on which they pledge themselves to run and to act if elected.

- Most important of all the structural reforms, we need to follow through on the recent congressional effort to discipline the use of money in politics, by setting realistic limits on campaign spending, limiting and publicizing individual and organizational gifts, and channeling much more of the money (including, in my view, all general election spending) through the respective party committees rather than through individual candidates' treasuries.

- We need to strengthen the party organizations and their staffs, and recapture for them the campaign management functions that have been parceled out to independent firms, which tend to operate with a fine disdain for the role of party and policy in government. We need to make television—the prime medium of political communications—somewhat more sensitive to the parties' claims to time; we need to protect the vital institution of the nominating con-

vention from being distorted by the demands of the television cameras.

All these reforms would help, I believe, but they would not accomplish the invigoration of responsible party government unless they were accompanied by a genuine increase in the participation by the public in party affairs. The cure for the ills of democracy truly is more democracy; our parties are weak principally because we do not use them. To be strong and responsible, our parties must be representative; and they can be no more representative than our participation allows. Millions more of us need to get into partisan political activity.

We also need to examine some of our habits. It seems to me that we should ask, before splitting a ticket, what it is we hope to accomplish by dividing between the parties the responsibility for government of our country, our state, or our community. Do we think there is no difference between the parties? Do we distrust them both so thoroughly that we wish to set them against each other? Do we think one man so superior in virtue and wisdom that he must be put into office, no matter who accompanies him there?

Why are we splitting our tickets? My guess is that if we asked these questions, we would more often be inclined to give a temporary grant of power to one party at a time rather than dividing responsibility so skillfully between the parties that neither can govern. If we were willing to risk this strategy, knowing that we would be able to throw the rascals out if they failed, we might even discover to our amazement that they are not always rascals.

These are the things we could do if we wanted to attempt responsible party government. But they would not, of course, be an answer to our problems as a nation. There are limits to what parties can do, limits indeed to what politics and government can do.

The party system is essentially a device for making choices between candidates and programs, and for enabling those who prevail at the polls to seek to put their policies into action. It is a way of expressing choice, and choice implies division, which will be ever present in a large and diverse nation like ours.

But for the two-party system to work, there must be not only division but large areas of agreement. There must be agreement on the rules of the game, so that losers accept defeat and winners do not attempt to abuse the advantage of victory. There must also be a high degree of agreement on the values and goals the society cherishes, so that political defeat does not seem to carry intolerable penalties for the losers. A party system must reflect the political community it serves, and when that community loses its sense of identity, the party system cannot fabricate one for it.

Whether we Americans still retain a vision of our-

selves as one people, one continent-sized community, is the ultimate question. And that is a question beyond politics. "Epochs sometimes occur in the life of a nation," Tocqueville wrote,

when the old customs of a people are changed, public morality is destroyed, religious belief shaken, and the spell of tradition broken, while the diffusion of knowledge is yet imperfect and the civil rights of the community are ill secured or confined within narrow limits. The country then assumes a dim and dubious shape in the eyes of the citizens; they no longer behold it in the soil which they inhabit, for that soil is to them an inanimate clod; nor in the usages of their forefathers, which they have learned to regard as a debasing yoke; nor in religion, for of that they doubt; nor in the laws, which do not originate in their own authority; nor in the legislator, whom they fear and despise. The country is lost to their senses; they can discover it neither in its own nor under borrowed features, and they retire into a narrow and unenlightened selfishness.

In such a situation as ours, Tocqueville said, it is not enough to call forth the "instinctive patriotism" of the people, "that instinctive, disinterested and undefinable feeling which connects the affections of man with his birthplace."

In a time of turbulence, Tocqueville said, we must turn to the "patriotism of reflection," a sentiment which he acknowledged "is perhaps less generous and less ardent, but . . . more fruitful and more lasting. It springs from knowledge; it is nurtured by the laws; it grows by the exercise of civil rights; and, in the end, it is confounded with the personal interests of the citizen. I maintain," he concluded, "that the most powerful and perhaps the only means that we still possess of interesting men in the welfare of their country is to make them partakers in the government."

To make them partakers in the government. That is the challenge that now faces our political parties. That is ultimately the test of responsible party government—to make all citizens feel they are partakers and participants in the government.

It will not be easy to revitalize our political parties. Even if that is done, our problems remain awesome. We must somehow rediscover our sense of community, of nationhood. We must heal the scars of slavery and generations of discrimination. We must find a way to meet our inescapably heavy responsibilities in the world, while nourishing the debilitated services on which our own welfare, well-being, and peace of mind depend. And to do all this, we must

make our government functional again in the great metropolitan areas, in the states, and in Washington. These are tasks that will test our democratic system and each of us as individuals.

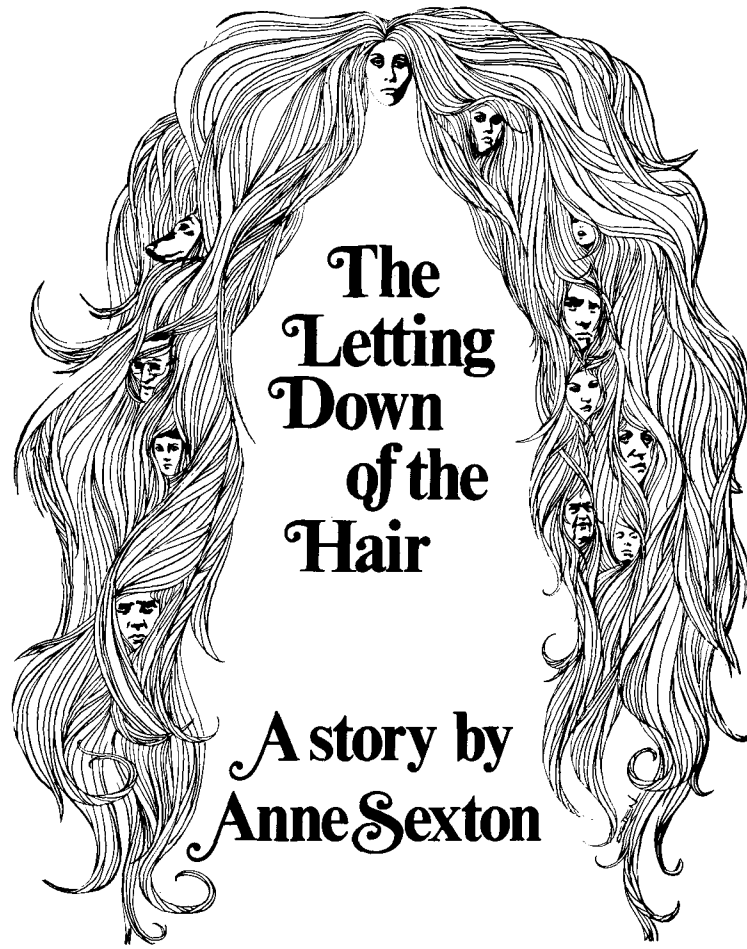
But to settle for less is to admit defeat for our ideals and our aspirations. I have called this article "The Party's Over." The pun is intended, but not the prophecy. I do not believe that our political parties are doomed, unless by our neglect of the services they can provide and the vital role they can play in re-energizing our political system.

But in another sense, the party is over, whether or not the political parties are revived. I do not expect to see again in America the kind of smugness, of euphoria that gripped Washington when I came to the capital city sixteen years ago. Since then, we have gone through the New Frontier and the Great Society and the New American Revolution, each briefer in duration and more patently false in its promise than the slogan that preceded it. If there is one thing the long travail of the last four presidencies has taught us, it is to be skeptical of the easy answer.

In the dark June of 1940, when the Nazi Army had captured Paris and was poised for an assault on England, while the United States stood by, seemingly impotent to act, Walter Lippmann told the reunion of his Harvard class that "upon the standard to which the wise and honest will now repair it is written . . . You took the good things for granted. Now you must earn them again. It is written: For every right that you cherish, you have a duty which you must fulfill. For every hope that you entertain, you have a task you must perform. For every good that you wish to preserve, you will have to sacrifice your comfort and your ease. There is nothing for nothing any longer."

The cost of being an American citizen is going up. If this nation is to survive and meet its challenges, many of us will have to sacrifice some of our personal luxuries to help pay for the society's neglected needs. What is more, we will have to give up the idea that we can escape from the consequences of our civil irresponsibility by purchasing private passage for our families to the segregated suburbs, to the private schools, and to the protected professions.

It is going to cost us time and energy and thought, diverted from our private concerns, to make government workable and politics responsible again in America. Our parties, our government will be no more representative than we make them, by our own commitment and participation. If we do nothing, we guarantee that our nation will be nothing. There is nothing for nothing anymore. Our choice is simple: either we become partakers in the government, or we forsake the American future. □



Attracting Thousands

I live in a stone room. Far from the luxury of draperies and transistors, far from the movie theaters and coffeehouses, far from the men in their business suits, far from the children playing with their Lincoln Logs. I have only the daily newspapers and letters from Ruth. To tell the truth, I'm a recluse. I'm as hesitant as Emily Dickinson. Like a novice I'm all dressed in white. A recluse, yes. Yet each day I attract thousands.

The Stone Room

As I said, a stone room. Like the stones of Chile. Like the craggy rocks of Gloucester, that desperate seacoast. The steps of Rome and Michelangelo and his stone creatures. A stone room, a cupola five stories high. Like a lion in a zoo I adjust to my environment.

I came up here long ago. I didn't hide because I was ugly. I wasn't made of wolfsbane. I wasn't made of kidneys. I was made tall and of yellow hair. I'd had a normal life: men and lipstick, daiquiris and sunburns. My skin was the color of a teacup, fair but fragile. And hair, yellow-yellow hair. Brush. Brush.

A stone room as still and clean as a razor blade. All the time of the child in me this room was my secret. Oh, Mr. Man-in-the-Moon, where was your radar? Memory? Memory, here is your knife. A room

to crawl into and hide. Better than the laundry chute. Better than the broom closet. A room unused except by birds.

Yes, as a child I would enter through a closet, standing tiptoe on a chair, up through the trapdoor into the forbidden—the dead maybe live up here, groaning every hour as they keep watch from the lookout window. Mother can't find me, little yellow ball. Father, you could find me if you would only look, but father is too sleepy to look. Else he'd come flying, come flying. Brother, old sneak-mouth, can't find my hide-and-seek. You'll never see. A stone room five stories up, the shape of a merry-go-round, and eleven feet in circumference. A room like the inside of a church bell. A chalice, a cave, a perch, queer bird that I am. A hidden place like the inside of a seedpod. Brush. Brush.

The Window That Watches the Pru

I have never cut my hair. That's something you ought to know right off. It fills the room the way ten giraffes would, twisting and twisting their long, innocent necks. My hair is innocent, too. It knows no better.

I have one window in this room and from it can see over the countryside. The lilacs in April blushing like ten-year-old ballet dancers. The snows of Valentine's Day laid out as smooth and as humped as a dentist's chair. And then there is the clock tower,

striking the hour, as faithful as a town crier. But today, this May 25th, the new leaves are green. They are my green ladies. They sing. They call out to me. They are the Christs of the grass.

But at night I watch the lights in the blackness. At night, along with the stars, those neon jacks, I watch the Pru and under it the skyline of Boston. The Pru stands up like an electrified totem pole. And the planes jet over from Chicago on their way to Logan Airport. In their bellies they carry one hundred and twenty people. I am alone. I am in my room. The room is my belly. It carries me.

The Death of Everyone Except Myself

Here is my mother. On my eighteenth birthday she said to me, "Why hair to the floor? Why? Every time you brush it you make me feel I'm coming out of anesthesia." But I couldn't cut it. I was faithful to my hair.

My father was indifferent. As he walked the rooms of our house, he acted as if he were reading the *Wall Street Journal* on the windowpane. "It's as normal," he would say, "as coffee for breakfast. Long hair. Short hair. Who cares?"

It wasn't normal at all. It was special.

My brother, the younger, ever the teaser. "What do you want to be taken for, Lady Godiva?" My brother, the younger, ever the adorer. "Please be mine," like an old-fashioned valentine, and then he printed it out on yellow paper: "Your hair is the color of the moon."

And Ruth. "Hey, dust mop!" as my hair caught on the legs of the antique tables. "Hey, Spanish moss," as her half-blind and adored greyhound ran after it like a string toy. Ruth the boy-child making jokes. Ruth the joker. Ruth the girl-child of two suicide attempts. Ruth the desperate and Ruth the wise who told the world, "As the Arab said: 'Enlarge the place of thy tent.'"

Brush. Brush.

One night my hair got in the pea soup that mother was stirring. She shouted, "The sight of you! The sight of you makes me wish I were dead!"

The next day she got her wish. She and my father out driving during a Sunday ice storm, on their way to a cocktail-brunch of caviar and Bloody Marys, skidded in the gray Lincoln and hit a telephone pole. They died instantly. Their necks snapped. My father's cigarette was still burning in his hand when the police arrived. They were buried side by side, heads loose, two broken dolls. Where was the blessedness? Where were the deep roots that grew me?

"You'd better cut your hair," my brother said after the funeral.

As if I could bring them back with a pair of scissors.

After that I came up to my stone room for good. But my brother didn't desert me. Little brother, now a man of sorrow, now a man in a pain hood. Yet I

couldn't help him. I could only help myself. I lived in a stupor of hair. Brother pushed trays of food up through the trapdoor daily. I have not seen him face to face since. However, he occasionally sends notes. On the first anniversary of my parents' death the note read: *You killed them. You killed them. Moon girl, a black curse on you.*

But that was a long time ago. Yesterday a note to my middle age. *Come down, come down, you yellow-haired martyr.*

Ruth

But most of the time it's just the newspaper carefully refolded and the mail. Envelopes addressed to The Lady of the Hair. And so forth. Letters from the people. And once in a while an aerogram from Ruth with its Japanese stamp. Ruth is my only contact with the past. Ruth my little Zen girl with her short cropped hair. Ruth the American girl with lovers, one after the other, long after she was married. Ruth. She changed like a seascape, ever changing, ever embracing. No matter what it was she was faithful to it. She was as obedient to each obsession as an old man washing his feet.

The lovers were all types: a drummer on pep pills and Ruth lapping her own pep pills' dust from the bureau drawer when she could get no more. Ruth with the foot doctor whose air conditioner gasped like a mechanical fish while they made love. Ruth with her cousin, the accountant, a precise lover, timing his thrust, she said, with a minute hand. Ruth who, after years of therapy, gave it all up for Zen. She watched her mind as a cat watches over a fish tank. She was large with her awareness; she was pregnant with her instincts. She had enlarged the place of her tent. Here in America she found the answer. "The puzzle to me is solved," she said with a new grace. And then her banker husband, First National Bank, V.P., was sent to Tokyo. Tokyo, the only city in the world with just one English-speaking psychiatrist. Or so she said. Her husband was in therapy four times a week. To be a banker was to have half a mouth. Or so she said.

Brush. Brush.

The Letting Down of the Hair

Here in my room I have my hair to care for. In the soapstone sink I wash from nine to eleven forty-five in the morning. Washerwoman, washerwoman, you make yourself dizzy. Washing this hair is a dance, a dance to be done at dawn. There is so much hair, so much sucked-up honey, that I must wash it in sections. The room becomes clammy like a sea cave, never dry. I am standing in my bare feet, dipping up and down over the sink probing the mystery. The parts that are washed sit in coils on the floor and wait patiently. It is like trying to wash sea grass. It is cumbersome and arduous and yet it is my work in life.

Then, as the clock tower chimes twelve noon, I carry it back and forth, over to the window, section by section, and hang it out the window to slap down the five stories onto the ground. I let it out to dry. I let it out to give it a life of its own. At first it hangs there like a rope, it hangs there like old yellow cereal that no one will eat. Then, if there is a hopeful wind, the breeze takes it; hair by hair, yellow by yellow. As it dries it is owned by the wind; as it dries it moves swiftly like a thousand minnows. And later when I bring it in it lies on the stone floor like wheat in a granary.

Over the years the people have gathered to watch it fall down and dry out. They call out, just as the clock strikes twelve: LADY! LADY! LET DOWN YOUR HAIR! I am becoming a tourist attraction and there is nothing I can do about it. The Gray Line bus arrives daily with a taped recording of facts—usually false—about what I do and who I am. And then there is the college crowd, who seem to have adopted me, and one obese woman who comes each day and beats out with a stick at the children who reach for the hair and want to tug it. The people have become very devoted or very disgusted. They often write to me. I don't answer them, of course, for my hair cannot speak and it is the hair they write to. Fifty letters came just last week in response to a TV crew that came out on Monday to film the letting down of the hair. Here is a sampling of last week's letters:

Concord, N. H.

Dear Lady of the Hair,

Your hair is haunting and moving. I love it. I couldn't see your face on our eighteen-inch screen but I could see your hair. I could see your lovely old Victorian house. But the psychologist on the show this morning said perhaps that for you death was the key. He said that your long hair is a symptom of a phobic fear of death. Don't you know that we go on to a larger life? Don't you know that there IS no such thing as death! There is only change.

Dying is a glorious experience for the one it happens to and even for those left behind for a while, it is glorious if we have true understanding.

Yours sincerely,
Beatrice Engle

Acton, Mass.

Dear Crazy-Hair,

Please help to make the world saner not crazier—it's bad enough as it is. God bless you and help you—you need help.

Unsigned

New York, N.Y.

Dear Matchmaker,

We met at your hair up there in Mass. Joel came out from Harvard every week of his senior

year. Now we are living together in New York. Last week he wrote a poem to your hair but he won't send it. I wish I could write. I'm quite illiterate and have no idea how I passed third grade. Sometimes I think that Joel loves me. Sometimes I think he loves you. I wish I were you. I wish I were my doctors or my OT's or my teachers or my doctors' wives or you. Do you know when I was, I guess around 6 I looked at my Siamese cat and said out loud, "I wish I was you, you're so beautiful and you don't have to wear any clothes."

Peace.

Suzy Pearlmutter

San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Lady,

Jesus how *do* you do it? I have been to see you ten times, enough times for the entire universe and that same feel of

Wham! Right in
the old solar plexus refuses to give up.

You are *so* beautiful
and I want some of that
beautiffulness

and I wanted it since a year ago
when I first found you. After last Saturday in
Boston and seeing you again I wanted it 'spe-
cially badly. And today I want it even more.

Lady

can you spare
a dime of yourself
for
MaryJane?

Letters From Ruth

Today's mail brought a letter from Ruth, a letter and a crucifix. It is a letter about Christ and the awful mystery. It is a letter about the sickness unto death. I have found Christ, she writes, hours on my knees in mental prayer. All my life I have lived in shadow. P.S., she added, I've even discovered what your hair means. It is a parable for the life of a poet.

Strange. There beside the Buddha, my little Zen Ruth. There beside that great green baby, that passive godface, Christ and the place of thy tent. She had enlarged once more. And the crucifix was wooden and with teeth marks on it. The greyhound puppy, of course. I could hear her saying, My dog is Christian, too.

Ruth has Christ, and I, I have only my hair. Am I like a poet? I mean to ask her about that.

The Sickness Unto Death

My hair is almost washed. The people are waiting down below and calling out for me. Just as I am carrying it over, my brother opens the trapdoor and

The Letting Down of the Hair

speaks. Speaks for the first time in all these years. "It's bad news," he says quietly. I stand very still, tangled in the midst of the hair. "Ruth's cousin just called. She's dead. She killed herself. First she hung the dog. And then she hung herself."

I am silent, and then I say, "Thank you for telling me." And he closes down the trapdoor.

The sickness unto death. Enlarge the place of thy tent. Ruth dead. Ruth gone. The dog hung up like a piece of meat in a butcher shop. Ruth hung up like a

thief. This change. This awful change. And I with the letter she wrote just five days ago. And the crucifix from her puppy's mouth.

The clock strikes twelve and I just stand here.

It's too late now. I wanted to ask Ruth what my life meant. Ask her about my tent. Ask her about the parable.

Now there is no one to ask. There are the people down below calling up LADY! LADY! LET DOWN YOUR HAIR! but I could hardly ask them. □

SAND DOLLAR

This disc, stelliferous,
survived the tide
to tell us some small creature
lived and died;
its convex delicacy
defies the void
that crushed a vanished
echinoid.

Stoop down, delighted;
hoard in your hand
this sand-colored coin
redeemed from the sand
and know, my young sudden
archaeologist,
that other modes of being
do exist.

Behold the horizon.
Vastness acts
the wastrel with
its artifacts.
The sea holds lives
as a dream holds clues;
what one realm spends
another can use.

by John Updike

PETRONIUS AMERICANUS

The Ways of Gore Vidal

by Gerald Clarke

"I look on myself as a 100 percent American writer, which is probably why I don't like living here. From Hawthorne to Hemingway, there is a tendency to get the hell out."

"Gore Vidal," said Gore Vidal, "has no close friends. There, I've written your lead for you." Gore Vidal pronounces on a subject as if further comment were irrelevant, impertinent, and perhaps even unwise. Particularly if the subject is one he is familiar with, such as Gore Vidal. Lounging on an overstuffed couch in his apartment on Manhattan's East Fifty-eighth Street, he could be a lion sunning himself in an African veld. The body and the slightly leonine face are still, lazy even, but the eyes, which Vidal himself has described as yellow agates, never stop, always ready to pounce on a threat, real or imagined, to his regality. After a few hours with Vidal, it is hard to tell the real threat from the imagined.

"What is your slant on me?" he asks. It is a professional question from a total professional, but behind it lurks as much suspicion as curiosity. Vidal, after all, has been an interviewer himself.

"I see you as the Petronius of the last days of the American Empire." He smiles, obviously pleased with the comparison to the author of the *Satyricon*, the first century's *arbiter elegantiarum*, about whom Tacitus wrote: "His conversation and his way of life were unconventional with a certain air of nonchalance, and they charmed people all the more by seeming so unstudied."

"Aah, the British usually compare me to Suetonius," he observes, referring to history's most famous tattletale, the dirty-minded author of the *Lives of the Caesars*. The eyes stop for a minute, flashing a sparkle of genuine, boyish delight, as if he had just played Tom Sawyer, short-sheeting Truman Capote

and conning William Buckley into whitewashing the back fence.

I talked with Vidal, off and on, over the course of more than a year, or whenever he was in New York. Most of the time he spends in Rome, which he now considers home; in Klosters, Switzerland, where he has an apartment; or in various parts of the United States, where he campaigns for the People's Party. He also recently bought a seven-acre farm in County Cork, Ireland, on the Atlantic near the town of Schull. In fact, he spends as little time as possible in New York, and indeed, in the United States, which he observes with varying degrees of dislike and bitterness, depending on the day and his mood. When I first saw him, his mood was not sanguine.

The smashup will come. G. V., An essay on Eleanor Roosevelt.

"I live more and more in Rome, less and less here. Only politics brings me back. The hope that something good might happen in '72. If not—well, screw it. I'm gone. There is a world elsewhere, as the Roman said. I want to get rid of everything I own here. I don't want anything in America. It's not safe—it's not safe for me. Like everyone else involved in freedom and peace, my phone is occasionally tapped. Believe me, my paranoia doesn't take that kind of form usually." Not long ago Vidal sold Edgewater, a beautiful 1820 Greek Revival mansion on the Hudson that he bought at a bargain price when he hit his first prosperity as a novelist, and he is now trying to sell the New York brownstone building in which he and Howard Austen, his companion of twenty-one years, have the second-floor apartment. The house itself is wider than most New York brownstones, and the living room seems bigger still because of the mirrors that decorate the cream green walls. It has several large overstuffed chairs and couches, and the stands and tables are covered with *objets d'art*. On one table

is a second-century white marble bust of a youth, supposedly Antinous, the lover of the Emperor Hadrian, whose drowning sent the great monarch into a lifetime of mourning. Comfortable though it is, the room, which faces onto the dramatic hulk of the Queensboro Bridge, is dark and gloomy this bright morning. The windowsills, partially hidden by turquoise drapes, are covered with the accretion of several months' grime. "The place hasn't been cleaned in six months," notes Vidal, interrupting my housekeeper's survey. "And you can say it's full of junk."

"It seems comfortable, though," I observe. "It's a shame to get rid of it. Do you really detest the United States so much?"

"I look on myself as a 100 percent American writer, which is probably why I don't like living here. Most 100 percent American writers don't like it either. Our best poet, Eliot, and our best novelist, James, became British subjects. From Hawthorne to Hemingway, there is a tendency to get the hell out. 'The United States are fit for many things,' Hawthorne used to say, 'but they are not fit to live in.' " He grins impishly, as if he himself had written the line, quickly changing to a serious, almost confessional tone. "Then, of course, it's nice to live where your work is admired. My press in America is almost always very bad. In Europe it's very good."

"Your reviews here haven't been all that bad," I interject. Vidal's penchant for the absolute statement inspires contradiction.

"Maybe one good review in ten. But then, are they really reviews? They usually read like Leonard Lyons' column, without Lenny's wit and polish. Our book-chat writers have heard about literary criticism, just as they know about books—they're something remote and faraway from school days. But when they have to actually describe a book, panic sets in. All those words to be read! Better to talk about the author: How much money does he make? What's his sex life? Politics? Life-style? Does he conform to what middle-class, middle-brow readers would think of as a really Good Person? I fear I'm not their idea of a Good Person. Worse, in *Two Sisters* [Vidal's last novel], I said 'classic' American literature wasn't much good. I dared suggest *Moby Dick* was not in the same class as *King Lear*. *Roget's Thesaurus* really hit the fan. After all, isn't America the greatest country on earth? If that's so, then its writers have to be the greatest—so Melville must be at least as good as Shakespeare. Actually, anyone who thinks Melville is in the same class as Tolstoy, George Eliot, Dickens, Flaubert, Stendhal . . . oh, well, you can't blame them. They're pumped so full of America the Beautiful laughing gas in school that they're kept permanently floating outside Western civilization.

"We'll never know whether anybody was a good novelist or a bad novelist in this period because there's nobody left to do the necessary reading," Vidal continues, speaking slowly but precisely, as if taking time to skewer half a dozen book-chat writers on

one well-placed conjunction. He, of course, never refers to them as reviewers. "The book-chat writers haven't read Stendhal, much less me. There is a kind of galloping cretinism in the land which does not augur well for our shoddy civilization.

"You see, if you don't share any of the cultural values of a country, you're immediately embattled. I have a militant nature, and I don't mind that at all, but it gets very tiring to live in continual conflict. I don't read the same books they do, I don't know the same culture, I don't have the same admirations, and I certainly don't have the same moral code as any of my contemporary writers. To me Norman Mailer is like the head of an American Legion post. His patriarchal attitudes toward sex are exactly the same, and his self-aggrandizing bullying is very much in the American tradition."

I tend to forget in my Roman life just how bracing the malice of the literary world is. G. V., *Two Sisters*.

I cannot resist adding a little fuel to the fire. "William Styron once told me that there are only five big writers in the country today. He included Mailer, of course, Truman Capote, and himself. You, I'm sorry to say, were not on his list." The handsome profile, accented by unusually high cheekbones, turns so that I receive the full brunt of his counterfeit sadness. Where there was fire, there is now conflagration.

"There are some writers who are more written about than others," he explains, ever so patiently. "I'm more written about than most. Is this bigness? The books of Styron's 'big' writers aren't very good. *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles is better than any novel by William Styron. The novels of Louis Auchincloss are better than the novels of Truman Capote. But Capote and Styron are big. Knowles and Auchincloss are small. Bill *looks* like a great writer, and he sounds like a great writer. He *ought* to be a great writer, therefore he *is* a great writer. Will anybody ever sort this out? In the absence of literary criticism, probably not." Poor Bill Styron's misplaced hubris is noted a few more times in the next hour or so—"the mind of William Styron, for heaven's sake!"—to be finally dismissed by Vidal with the generous confession that he has "nothing but love for this decent fellow careerist, agreeably mixed with pity." Sensing that he is close to becoming maudlin, I quickly switch to another of Styron's quintet of titans. "How about Truman Capote?" I ask. "Do you have nothing but love for him too?" I might just as well have stuck him with a pin. Capote is for Vidal a raw nerve which twitches involuntarily from time to time and jumps under pressure. Today it does somersaults. Vidal has an actor's control of his speech, however, and his voice descends to a slow, pleasant, altogether improbable purr.

"Truman and I have known each other since I was nineteen and he was twenty. His first short story and my first novel came out in the same year. All through

the forties we were linked together by the press, I suppose just because we were the two youngest writers. Neither of us much enjoyed the linking together. Capote always had a passion for knowing the rich and famous. It didn't make any difference who or what they were otherwise. He just had to be in their company. He finally became famous himself, through association. Those little books certainly wouldn't have done that for him.

"Remember those terrible little stories about loneliness? So like Faith Baldwin. It's a marvelous commentary on the American cultural scene that a sentimental, popular writer like Capote, proudly mindless, would ever be taken seriously as a distinguished stylist and a fine imagination, and, heaven help us, a great wit. I've known Truman twenty-five years, and he has never said anything witty in all that time." As with his dissection of Styron, spleen finally gives way to a kind of compassion, or at least to Vidal's kind of compassion. "I will admit he is marvelous company. With the exception of Jack Kennedy, Capote is the best gossip I've known, even though he is not always reliable. Like his story: 'Errol Flynn followed me up to my room at the Beverly Wilshire, and when I refused to have anything to do with him, he threw all my baggage out the window!' Capote saves his talent for his conversational improvisations. He should be heard, not read."

There is nothing so brutal as a contest of similar masculine wills. G. V., Two Sisters.

Capote, I later discover, does not need to be prompted to talk about Vidal, either. "As a novelist I think Gore stinks," he tells me. "I think he's the worst. I thought *Myra Breckinridge* was funny, but I'll bet that it's the only one of his books that Gore Vidal has ever read. *Two Sisters* is unreadable. I think he put it together the way William Burroughs does his books—by cutting and glueing." Then, in perhaps the cruelest cut of all to Vidal, who thinks himself the most original and imaginative of modern American writers, Capote adds: "There's nothing original in him. His books wobble like a ball trying to find the hole in a pinball machine. He has style in his essays and in his person, but not as a writer of prose fiction." Like Vidal, Capote does not want to be thought unfair, and with the thorns he throws a rose, only slightly mildewed and curled at the ends. "He is a good essayist. He's very intelligent and he's a first-class debater. He's a walking piranha, that boy. I wouldn't mind debating him, but I can't think of many people who could. He demolished Bill Buckley. And I told Buckley so."

"Did you and Gore ever fight?" I ask.

"Yes, we did have a quarrel once, a real one. It took place in Tennessee Williams' house about 1954. I can't remember what it was about, but it was intense—brief and intense. But mostly I didn't like some of the things that I heard Gore was saying

about me." I pass up the opportunity to learn what Gore had been saying about him and rush to the heart of the matter. Curiosity is stronger than discretion.

"Was there anything between Gore and you in the old days?"

"No. I was not attracted to him and vice versa, though he was very charming and very good-looking in those days. I will say that. Of course, he practically lived in various Turkish baths, and that might account for his beautiful complexion. His favorite was the Everard, as I recall. It's been around since the Civil War; the man who runs it dates from the Civil War, too." He shrieks with high-pitched glee at that bon mot, almost stunning me; then, my ears still ringing, he presses his serious button. When he wants to, Capote can be remarkably perceptive. "Gore has a lot of charm, you know. But basically he's cold. I find something very similar to Somerset Maugham in him, a certain sort of coldness, remoteness and level-headed ambition. He has built his career very carefully. He wants to be in the *Saturday Review* and at the same time he wants to be in a snot-rag like the *New York Review*." Gore, Capote adds, almost as an afterthought, "is cynical, he's bitter and he's disappointed. He always has been." Clearly a lot has happened since they were celebrated literary prodigies in the forties, nightclubbing together and meeting for weekly gossip lunches amid the palms at the Plaza, while their contemporaries were writing sophomore papers at Yale and Harvard.

Vidal's family background was almost totally nonliterary. His father, who died in 1969, had grown up in South Dakota, which his family, originally from Northern Italy, had helped pioneer. After graduating from West Point, where he had been a football star, and competing in the decathlon at the 1920 Olympics, Eugene Vidal worked in commercial aviation, helping to found the companies that are now Northeast and Trans World Airlines. He was Director of Air Commerce in Franklin D. Roosevelt's first Administration, and among other chores, he directed the much-publicized search for Amelia Earhart. (Vidal *filis* adds a minor footnote to her saga with the information that she was in love with his father.) Despite the fact that his father was a Goldwaterite and 180 degrees off his own course politically, he was one of the few men Gore has ever admired. "They really adored each other," says Howard Austen. "I've never seen such love. I was very, very jealous of their relationship. I wish I could be as close to my father."

The same could not be said for his relationship with his mother, Nina. The daughter of Senator Thomas Gore, an anti-Roosevelt Democrat who represented Oklahoma for twenty years, she was prominent in Washington society and probably never had much in common with her husband from South Da-

kota. The marriage was not good, at any rate, and as his parents headed toward divorce, Vidal spent more and more time at his grandfather's big house in Washington's Rock Creek Park. The old man, whom Vidal also greatly admired, was blind, and Vidal read to him from congressional papers, constitutional history, and English common law. Vidal will say very little about his mother. "We're not very close. I haven't had much to do with her in a long time. She was very beautiful. *Time* magazine always referred to her as 'beauteous.' Henry Luce was in love with her and tried to marry her when she divorced Hugh Auchincloss. 'Clare doesn't understand me,' he told her. The dialogue of the tycoons! My mother was much amused. She would have been much better off today if she had married him. She had a gift for not doing the right thing, you know."

Nobody much likes laying his adolescent traumas before the public, particularly when they were as painful as Vidal's seem to have been with the beauteous Nina. He therefore smarts a little at the mention of novelist Anaïs Nin, who, in her most recent diary, records—more or less faithfully, one gathers—what he confided to her twenty-five years ago. "He told me his mother said to him: 'No one will ever love you as I do,'" she writes. "He had wanted his mother to die."

In 1939, when Vidal was fourteen, his mother sent him to Los Alamos School in New Mexico, atop the mesa where the atomic bomb was later developed, for an exposure to the West and the great outdoors. Exeter, which provided the last of Vidal's formal education, was a welcome contrast. He was a debater, politician, and junior literatus, whose pale, bony face "sliced" through the campus, according to novelist John Knowles. Though he never met Vidal at Exeter, Knowles, who was a class or two behind, was so impressed with him from a distance that he modeled Brinker Hadley, the irritating adolescent wit of *A Separate Peace*, after him. Two months after graduation in 1943, Vidal joined the Army; he eventually became first mate of an army transport in the Aleutians, an experience he writes about in *Williwaw*.

Not since Hemingway was there a young writer so intent on dominance! G. V. on G. V., Two Sisters.

Williwaw placed Vidal prominently and somewhat prematurely among postwar novelists. Queuing up behind such other literary figures as D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Edmund Wilson, he almost immediately became a close friend of the indiscreet Miss Nin, who, like George Sand, seems to feel that her destiny is to love famous artists so that she can put them down in her diary. After such an all-star procession, Vidal was, of course, entranced by her. "From the moment I set foot on the literary stage, there she was," he says, "the first person I had ever met in that world. She was forty-two and I was



Gore Vidal

twenty, still in the Army, still in uniform. I had never met anyone like her, and I was fascinated by her, by her whole love-goddess persona. Curiously enough, I don't think I really liked her writing even then. It comes out in her journals that she didn't like mine either. ["Action, no feeling," she, in fact, says of his novels.] So we had a slightly insincere duet on the subject of our common art."

Vidal is at once fascinated, annoyed, and a little embarrassed by the portrait of him in her diary. Though her style is ninth-grade schoolgirl—Edmund Wilson gave her a copy of Jane Austen to demonstrate to her that good prose is not necessarily unfeminine—her insight into Vidal is clairvoyant. "He is active, alert, poised," she writes of him at twenty. "He tells me he will one day be President of the United States. He identifies with Richard the Second, the king-poet. He is full of pride, conceals his sensitiveness, and oscillates between hardness and softness. . . . Intellectually he knows everything. Psychologically he knows the meaning of his mother abandoning him when he was ten, to remarry and have other children." She quotes him as confessing: "I do not want to be involved, ever. . . . I like casual relationships. When you are involved you get hurt."

Are you really so detached? Or like so many of the politic young men nowadays have you merely learned the proper responses? G. V., One character to another in *The Judgement of Paris*.

For Vidal the forties was a "brilliant period," with 1948, the year in which *Two Sisters* was set, as its pinnacle. Oddly enough, it was also the year that his literary career almost ended, the result of the scandal caused by publication of *The City and the Pillar*, the first and for many years the most famous American homosexual novel. Like so many other shockers of the era, it is hard now to see what the fuss was all about. There are no graphic sexual scenes, and, as Vidal noted in an essay, there is "nothing fancy in the writing," which is not only flat, but downright dull. Still, it was enough to cause the New York *Times* to refuse advertising for the book, to make Vidal for years afterward a minor pariah to critics, and to prompt André Gide to give him a copy of *Corydon*, as one prophet to another.

Whatever the book's merits, it quickly brought down what Stephen Spender sarcastically called Vidal's "whizzing comet." His next five novels were scarcely noticed; they brought him an average of about \$5000 apiece. Finally, in 1954, almost totally broke, he turned to television, a not unhappy home for the rest of the decade. "The great fun of live television was that you were wanted, you were needed," he remembers. "They'd call you up and say: 'Chayefsky hasn't finished his play, and we need something four Sundays from now.' Paul Newman and Kim Stanley were standing by. I rather think that that was the way the Globe Theater operated—

not that the result on the tube was the same." The only unfortunate part of Vidal's TV phase was that it caused a ten-year pause in his career as a novelist.

For a sweet second or two in the early sixties Vidal saw himself as the New Frontier's chief intellectual courtier. He was a minor Democratic politician in his own right, having run in 1960 an unexpectedly good, if losing, race for Congress in the overwhelmingly Republican district he lived in along the Hudson. More important, he knew President Kennedy through his wife, whose stepfather, Hugh Auchincloss, had once been married to Vidal's mother. Both Jack and Jackie liked him—Jack even suggested one of the lines in *The Best Man*, a play about a presidential race. But Bobby, for altogether mysterious reasons, placed him in the same corner that he reserved for the Jimmy Hoffas. "Bobby hated, truly hated only a couple of people," says one of his former aides. "Hoffa was one, and Vidal was another." Finally, at a memorable party in the White House, their drama came to a conclusion. Both had been drinking, and Bobby had complained about an article Vidal had written that was critical of the Justice Department. At one point, Vidal put his hand on Jackie in an affectionate, brotherly gesture. Bobby was inexplicably outraged and angrily reproached him. "'We don't do that sort of thing to the First Lady,'" George Plimpton, who was several feet away, quotes Bobby as saying. "Gore said something like: 'For God's sake, she's my stepsister. We've known each other for years.' Then they got into an argument, and Bobby told Gore he was nothing but a hack writer. Gore turned sheet white. 'You should never say that to a writer,' he replied. Somehow he seemed to know that night that it was all over, that his dream had ended."

Shortly after his exile from the White House, Vidal took up more or less permanent residence in Rome. The years in television, various movie scripts, including part of the scenario for *Ben Hur*, and two Broadway hits, *Visit to a Small Planet* and *The Best Man*, had made him financially secure, and he began writing novels again. *Julian*, a study of the fourth-century anti-Christian Emperor, was followed by *Washington, D.C.* That was followed, in turn, by the brilliant and infamous satire, *Myra Breckinridge*, and finally by *Two Sisters*. He is currently at work on his thirteenth novel, a semicomical story about that expert marksman Aaron Burr, and he recently completed the screenplay for *Plaza*, a combination of *Grand Hotel* and *Airport*, with New Left revolutionaries taking over a famous hotel and holding hostage its important guests. A new political play by Vidal, *An Evening With Richard Nixon*, has been scheduled to open on Broadway in March, and a road-show company may be formed shortly thereafter to tour those states that have primary elections. *Richard Nixon* is mostly Nixon in his own words. Vidal assured me

that he could not have created anything funnier if he had written the words himself.

A veteran behind-the-scenes creator of TV's so-called golden age in the fifties, Vidal discovered in the sixties that he had a talent in front of the camera as well. His ability to deliver an instant monologue on any subject has made him a talk-show favorite, and almost any week when he is in the country he can be seen throwing off shocking—but not too shocking—one-liners from the tube. His most famous TV appearance, the debate with William Buckley during the 1968 Democratic convention, is still being replayed in federal district court in Manhattan. Vidal called Buckley a “pro-crypto-Nazi,” and Buckley replied: “Now, listen, you queer. Stop calling me a crypto-Nazi or I’ll sock you in your goddamn face.” Buckley sued Vidal for \$500,000 in libel damages (with a later \$1 million suit against *Esquire*, in whose pages Vidal subsequently explained his remark), and Vidal countersued for \$4.5 million. The dispute still has not gone to trial, and it has clearly shaken Vidal, who talks about it in worried, not-for-publication tones. Even for Vidal, whose income is just short of the tycoon stage, \$500,000 is a considerable sum. (“Are you a millionaire?” I once asked. “I draw the curtain over that,” he answered. “But I think that John O’Hara was right when he said that writers have the incomes of millionaires without the million dollars.” In fact, even in a bad year like 1971, he could command \$150,000 to \$175,000 for a film script; for the sale of *Myra Breckinridge*, whose script he did not touch, he received something close to a record, about \$700,000.)

The novel being dead, there is no point to writing made-up stories. G. V., Myra Breckinridge in *Myra Breckinridge*.

In addition to the novels, plays, and screenplays, Vidal over the last decade has also produced a constant stream of political and literary essays, whose nearly forgotten form he has mastered and stamped as his own. One way to rile him, indeed, is to suggest, as many of his friends did to me, and as I obligingly did to him, that he is a better essayist than a novelist. “My novels are twice as good as my essays,” he shot back, in a beautifully flustered boomerang put-down. Vidal would sooner face the lash than drop a comma in conversation or—horror of horrors—commit such a classic verbal gaffe. “However, it’s necessary to read novels to find out how good they are, and reading novels is difficult for journalists.”

What wounds, it seems, is that Vidal realizes that except for a brief period in the forties, he was not taken seriously as a writer until he had made a name as an essayist and, yes, as a journalist. What wounds even more, I think, is that many critics even now refuse to take him seriously as a writer of fiction and wish he would concentrate on what they think is his

true vocation as intellectual commentator. For someone who considers himself pre-eminently a literary man, a descendant of James and Proust, that is an opinion not to be borne lightly. Vidal not only reads reviews of his work, he also remembers them, broods over them, and turns them over and over in his mind long after they have grown yellow and brittle. One night after we both had had a drink or two too many, he was almost touchingly confessional. “I don’t mind bad reviews,” he said. “It’s when they talk about me as if I were Irving Wallace—that’s when it hurts.”

The fact is that Vidal Novelist had an unusually long apprenticeship. The early books, the eight that preceded *Julian*, are workmanlike enough, but they are curiously flat and undefined, without any of the zest and bitchy vitality Vidal shows in even the most ordinary conversation. Perhaps the years of thrall-dom to the tube were not such a waste after all, because when he did return to the novel a decade later in *Julian*, he brought to it the flavor and the energy of his own person. He is still an overly intellectual novelist, but now his subjects are more in keeping with his particular novelistic shtik. *Julian* is one of the best historical novels since Robert Graves’s *I, Claudius*; it is a vigorous, authoritative re-creation of fourth-century Rome seen through several first-person accounts. *Washington, D.C.* is much less successful, partly, I think, because Vidal has always been uncomfortable with the conventional third-person narrative. Though he knows the Washington power game better than any other novelist, the plot creaks, and the characters move around awkwardly, self-consciously, and finally, unbelievably. He almost admits as much. “I don’t know why,” he says, “but the third person imposed a great strain on me, the constant maneuvering of so many consciousnesses through the various scenes while trying to keep the focus right.”

In *Myra Breckinridge*, however, Vidal created a comic masterpiece, and what were faults in the earlier novels—a coldness and a passionless analysis of love and sex—became major virtues. Comedy, after all, demands “something like a momentary anesthesia of the heart,” in Bergson’s words. Its appeal is to intelligence, rather than feelings, and the intellect is where Vidal is most at home. American standards of sexual morality are turned inside out, and Vidal, with malicious glee, paints white black and black white. Not for nothing has he read and reread Evelyn Waugh, who laid down the rules of satire for Vidal’s generation. Like Waugh, Vidal can create brilliant comic types, and he has an uncanny ear for absurd dialogue, which he reproduces with unfailing accuracy. In *Myra*, Vidal at last had found his voice as a novelist.

Ironically, the voice was the same one that he uses in his essays, a mixture of amusement and outrage at nearly everything and everybody. Only the accent was different. The many voices of *Myra* were Vidal

in drag. The voice of the essays is Vidal as he is, cool, patrician, stoical, with an arch smile masking a baleful grimace of rage. In *Two Sisters*, fiction and essay become one—with only partial success. Though the book has many superb comic moments and at least one fine comic figure in Murray Morris, the crudely crafty Hollywood producer, it does not hang together either as novel or memoir. It is Vidal playing games with mirrors and himself, and, not surprisingly, the only real character is Vidal himself, sitting under his lemon tree and watching the sun set from his elegant Roman terrace and every once in a while heaving a bored sigh, as if he had just been offered a 1968 Burgundy—when everyone knows that 1966 was a better year.

It is not that Vidal's essays are better than his novels. It is rather that his essays are more consistently good and that the qualities that limit him as a novelist are precisely those that a good essayist needs: a forceful intelligence, a cool detachment, an unpretentious, graceful style, and a sense of perspective that distinguishes the big from the little. If most of his fictional characters seem unbelievable, his judgments on real people are both original and irrefutable. When Vidal has passed judgment on a minor figure like Walter Annenberg, for instance, there is not much more anyone can say. "Had he not been born with money," Vidal writes of the current Ambassador to Britain, "he might have found a happy niche for himself as a sales manager in some small firm where his crudeness and lack of civilization would have been a virtue."

The only quibble with his political essays—one, I will grant, that could be made against almost any writer as well—is that he has no strong social or political philosophy. "Americans are not ideologues," he says to that. "I'm an American, and therefore I am not an ideologue. If I have to say, I suppose I'm a socialist of a dull, democratic Scandinavian sort." He is for complete social, sexual, and political freedom; he is against big business, American imperialism, and pollution. "To reverse what's being done to the environment will require world controls," he says, however. "And I can't square that with personal freedom. This is the split in my head, and should be in everybody else's. But so far nobody has come up with a solution."

To his credit, he is not merely a gadfly. Action follows words, and he spends considerable time campaigning for his pet causes. He is "shadow" Secretary of State of the People's Party, an amalgamation of more than a score of peace parties, including the New Party, of which he, along with Dr. Benjamin Spock, was co-chairman. He realizes that the People's Party has not the slightest chance of winning the presidential election, but he does think that it might take a small chunk, perhaps 5 percent, of the vote and push the Democrats to the left. Beyond that, he sees little light in the Democratic Party.

Teddy Kennedy, he thinks, should be "an amiable bartender. That's what nature intended him for." Edmund Muskie is a "very standard politician." George McGovern is "noble but futile." John Lindsay? "Charming . . ." On the other side, Nixon, who fascinates him beyond all measure, is a "marvelously empty ambulance chaser from Whittier." Like many others who were brought up as boys in Washington, his real—and quite genuine—ambition is to be President himself. "Nobody of my generation was better equipped," he lamented early one morning at P. J. Clarke's, the Third Avenue bar. "And I could have made it, too—if it hadn't been for this fag thing." At two o'clock in the morning, and for some time afterwards, I believed him.

In Rome, Vidal's life has settled into what he describes as "a blissful routine." He has a nine-room penthouse apartment in an eighteenth-century palazzo on the Largo Argentina, behind the Pantheon, with a huge, L-shaped terrace that overlooks most of the city, including, in the distance, St. Peter's. He begins work in the morning, usually in bed—everything but lengthy dialogue is in long-hand—and continues for three or four hours, first revising what he has written the day before and then going on to new ground. "First coffee," he says, "then a bowel movement. Then the muse joins me." A typist comes in every afternoon to type up that morning's work for the next morning's revision. When a piece is finished, he revises again, often as many as seven times. Defying Adelle Davis and all accepted principles of nutrition, he skips breakfast and cooks himself only two hard-boiled eggs for lunch. After the eggs he walks, six days a week, to his gym for a workout with weights and a mile run. In late afternoon he usually returns (or so he says) for sex. He does not specify what kind or which one. "After the gymnasium the blood is beginning to flow through the body slowly, and you're able to get through it with a minimum of wear and tear on the heart," he explains, like a mechanic recommending a lube job for a vintage car. "Besides that, if you worry about whether you're going to be laid after dinner, it ruins conversations." That problem settled, the evening is for reading, which seems to be both less taxing and more pleasurable for Vidal, and for dinner, at nine or nine thirty, with friends. He usually is home by eleven thirty and settled in bed, once again, with a book. He is one of those people who demand eight or nine hours' sleep.

Business matters and the humdrum chores are taken care of by his companion, Howard Austen, a pleasant, bespectacled, boyish-looking man of forty-three who lives with Vidal and who is, by his own description, Vidal's accountant, bill-payer, and high-class secretary. "Let's put it this way," he says, "Gore doesn't have to do anything but write. Everything else is taken care of."

Unlike Mary McCarthy, the Subject does not extend confidences to biographers. G. V., Reflections Upon a Sinking Ship.

With Vidal the question inevitably, ineluctably, and sometimes unintentionally turns to sex, if only because he has written about it so much and so seemingly autobiographically. But he likes to write and talk about it on his own terms—in coy, teasing asides—and he grows irritated when he is pressed directly.

“You have talked pretty openly about being bisexual.”

“So is everybody, you know.”

“But you push it fairly aggressively.”

“I’ve never been aggressively for bisexuality,” he says, close to real anger. “That’s like saying I’ve been aggressively for blue eyes. What does it mean? Most of the taboos and prejudices Americans have about sex are not only wrong but dangerous to the society. Therefore, the sex laws must be changed. That’s the only specific I’ve ever worried about. But I *ought* to have said that homosexuality is better than heterosexuality. I *ought* to have, therefore I did say it. In fact, I never have, nor anything remotely that fatuous.” (He came close to it, however, in an essay on Yukio Mishima. “Homosexual encounters,” he wrote, “are in themselves quite as exciting as heterosexual encounters—more so, claim the great pederasts whose testimony echoes down the ages.” Great pederasts?)

Indeed, Vidal says, he has no psychological need at all for men and must have the company of women. “I have an extremely competitive and warlike nature, and my relations with men are consequently bound to be a little harsh. None of that do I feel with women. If twenty-five of the most beautiful boys in the world walked in the door, I would just yawn. I have to have women as well.” Still, competition with other males is a kind of psychological need, and warrior that he is, Vidal seems invigorated by conflict with men, particularly when he is on the winning side, waving the scalp of a newly defeated enemy. When the vanquished is an ancient foe in the literary wars like Norman Mailer, you can almost see Vidal dancing around the campfire. Talking, for example, about an encounter with Mailer during the taping of a December *Dick Cavett Show* (something of a cultural disaster all around), he fairly burbled with delight. “It was like spending ninety minutes with Donald Duck—quack! quack! quack! Norman was almost hysterical. ‘Everybody’s against me because I’m the champion,’ he said. The audience booed him, and at the end, even Cavett was on edge. I played it coolly, feeding him a foot of rope every so often. It was his own fault, but I feel goddamned guilty about it today. We all feel protective about Norman. I can’t think why.”

When he was seventeen or eighteen, Vidal almost

married. He came close again in 1954, when the woman was Joanne Woodward. She was having a stormy affair with Paul Newman, who was married to someone else at the time, and Vidal, to use Howard’s phrase, was “always there.” Newman, whom she eventually did marry, was also Vidal’s intimate friend, and Vidal still remains close to both of them, usually spending Christmas at their house in Connecticut and playing godfather to their oldest daughter. Elaine Dundy, author of *The Dud Avocado*, a comic novel, and the former wife of critic Kenneth Tynan, was next on his list of candidates. “I suppose if I could have been married to anybody,” he declares, “I could have been married to Elaine. One laughs with her more than with just about anyone.” (“I certainly gave him plenty of opportunity,” she retorted when I read her that line. “I was madly in love with him.”)

Now forty-six, Vidal looks toward his next birthday, in October, 1972, with more than the usual alarm. His father and his maternal grandfather, Senator Gore, both suffered nearly fatal, devastating illnesses at forty-seven, and Vidal has circled that year as his personal danger period. “Since my father had the same chest I have, I can’t help but think I have the same heart. Who knows what clots and embolisms are now building in the bloodstream and arteries?” This brings him to the gloomy subject of death. Unlike many of us, he admits to terror at the thought. “Where does the light go when it goes out? Nowhere at all. The thought of it is most alarming. I see it as total extinction, and I don’t take to that very well.” To keep the light on, he worries about cholesterol and when he is in Rome or New York, follows a strict schedule of exercise. When he travels, however, this spartan regimen is abandoned, and his waistline explodes, to his profound and vocal dismay. Vidal does not hide his enormous vanity, either professional or physical, and “fat” is an obscene word to him. Once, talking about someone we both knew and liked, he finally dismissed him with what was for him the last word: “But he’s still fat, you know.”

At a similar point in his career, George Bernard Shaw wrote: “I have advertised myself so well that I find myself, whilst still in middle life, almost as legendary a person as the Flying Dutchman. Critics, like other people, see what they look for, not what is actually before them.” At this point, too, the Petronius image breaks down—Petronius, poor fellow, committed suicide at Nero’s behest, something Vidal is unlikely to do for Richard Nixon—and the Shaw image takes over. Like Shaw, Vidal has made a career of outraging his countrymen. Like Shaw, he is irritating, pugnacious, yet undeniably brilliant, ever ready to share his wit with those he disdains. And like Shaw, who lived to the age of ninety-four, Vidal, the arbiter of our immorals, will probably be around forever, his denunciations as pungent and as marketable in 2002 as they are in 1972. Or so it seems. □

BELIEVING IN BLUEGRASS

by Robert Cantwell



The themes of bluegrass music transcend simple otherworldliness, and at best they are genuinely metaphysical.

Bill Monroe's Fifth Annual Bluegrass Music Festival last summer in Bean Blossom, Indiana, drew more people than even Bill Monroe could have anticipated. Bill Monroe, in case you didn't know, is a direct descendant of President James Monroe and the man credited with the "invention" of bluegrass music. If you ask Bill Monroe just what bluegrass music is, he will say simply that it is "the best music in the world." I doubt that anyone at Bean Blossom much minded the hyperbole. Those of us who love bluegrass love it obsessively. I got my money's worth right at the gate, where Bill Monroe, who had never seen me before in his life, said "Howdy!" and smiled like a senator.

When Bill Monroe thirty years ago began to sing and play the traditional string band music of the Appalachian range, he was able, by a subtle and sensitive control of immense exertions, to focus its diverse energies into a formal style as rich as the blues in its powers of personal expression. His ringing, athletic mandolin-picking and his unearthly tenor voice, which sounds something like the wind, have made him a sort of Leadbelly or Bessie Smith of mountain music. And because his band hailed from Kentucky, he called them "The Blue Grass Boys," and so named a renewed tradition of folk music which is, remarkably, still in the hands of its own folk.

We came to Bean Blossom to hear bluegrass music, and to see it. In the park the commerce of guitars, banjos, fiddles, mandolins, and tenor voices could be heard from six o'clock one morning until three the next. Bluegrass bands are as exciting to watch as hockey games, and cannot be fully appreciated except in person. I discovered at Bean Blossom that because I had never seen Bill Monroe in person I had never really heard him. The most sophisticated recording instruments cannot reproduce the drama generated by the corporate creation of a tune. First, there is the choreography of performance, the regularly changing relationship of each member of the band to the microphone—or simply to the foreground—which a group must master in order to render a piece coherently. The lead singer, who most often plays mandolin or guitar, lingers near the center and is joined by one, two, three, or all of the others for choruses in harmony. Meanwhile, a vastly complicated interplay of melodies is embroidered in the background by fiddle, mandolin, and banjo. At the end of a chorus the singers abruptly disperse to make way for the solo instrument—banjo, fiddle, mandolin, and more recently the guitar—on which the soloist displays his often incredible virtuosity with variations on the theme. At the end of his break he will

Bill Monroe

either sail away on a river of notes or suddenly swoon into a void behind the lead singer who has returned to the point of focus. All of this is done, by professionals at least, with fluidity and ease, but with scrupulous care as well. Part of the effect of the music is the tension one feels between what is heard, with its energy and movement, and what is seen, the absolute concentration required of a performer in the execution of a break. While the music may make you want to jump out of your skin, the band itself, especially the banjo-player, is stone-steady and poker-faced. For the musician, performance is an opportunity to be both wholly himself—to display his particular abilities and ideas—and to submerge himself wholly in the identity of the group.

Just what the “identity of the group” is makes an interesting question. One highly proficient professional group, The Country Gentlemen, who have been playing bluegrass for at least fifteen years, recently had a rather sweeping change in personnel: of the original quartet, three have been replaced. Yet they are, in some fundamental way, the same people that they have always been. Similarly, Bill Monroe’s Bluegrass Boys, with whom practically every well-known bluegrass musician has played at one time or another, retains that quality which Bill Monroe once sought and obviously found. Like oral epic literature, if I may be allowed a somewhat academic analogy, bluegrass music is formulaic, being primarily a fund of instrumental licks and runs, traditional melodies and songs which are transmitted not only in live performance, as it was for epic in the days of Homer, but also by means of phonograph records. In fact, all songs and instrumental breakdowns, whether traditional or originally composed, enter the bluegrass “tradition” once they are recorded, yet change, grow, and influence one another in authentic oral fashion.

At Bean Blossom perfect strangers could form bands and in moments be making fine music together. Even though a bluegrass musician develops himself largely in solitary, he cannot fully display or even realize his musical abilities until he participates with other individuals in a band. Thus he is not fully an individual, musically at least, until he is swept up in the operations of that tiny but very real community. I believe anyone who has ever played in a bluegrass band will testify that it can be a deeply satisfying and elevating experience, and at times—in those moments of transcendent cooperation—sublime. Consequently the music is largely participatory, and those who came to Bean Blossom were seeking, I think, something more than diversion, stimulation, or entertainment. I was astonished to find that even while Bill Monroe performed in the park pavilion, intrepid pickers and fiddlers, in and out of tents, campers, and house trailers, were making bluegrass.

On Tuesday, “Barbecue Bean Day” and the first

day of the festival, there were flash floods forty miles away, where two inches of rain had fallen in forty-five minutes. In the remote areas of the park, now filling up as more and more people arrived, cars and pickup trucks with campers were settling complacently into the mud and declaring that spot their campsite. Not until the following day, when attendance began to exceed expectations, did it become necessary to move the automobiles and park them in neat rows to make room for newcomers, who were arriving at all hours of the day and night. In this mild crisis there was, of course, an elated conviviality as strangers cooperated to push out of the mud the most absurdly marooned Oldsmobiles, Buicks, and Chevys—not all showroom iron. A brightly painted pickup with chrome wheel covers, two or three American flag decals on the back window, and a richly laden shotgun rack behind the driver’s seat arose from the mud with the aid of four or five grunting, groaning, laughing hippies with shoulder-length hair, tie-dyed shirts, and mottled jeans, and a braless girlfriend standing by.

Throughout Wednesday and Thursday the society in Bill Monroe’s Jamboree Park shifted and settled, each newcomer orienting himself to the somewhat elusive water supplies, to the geography of the park, and to the IGA store a quarter of a mile down Indiana 135. Being neighborly seemed much easier in the more perfect democracy of a camping ground, where outward signs of social differences are minimized, and unwitting judgments happily retarded. Nearly everyone was cooking on a Sears or Coleman cookstove, lighting his way with a Sears or Coleman lantern, sleeping in a Sears cotton-twill wax-finish cabin tent—what did it matter that some folks had campers with built-in stoves and real beds? It was all a kind of circus, and it was difficult to feel anything but innocent delight.

Walking from one end of the camp to the other, perhaps from the phone booth out on the highway or from the grocery store back through the main gate, across the flat plain of the parking area, down the hill and into the woods, then onto the mud road leading back to a second, recently bulldozed clearing one could hear, in fluid sequence, bluegrass bands, first one, then a hint of the next, then a new band several yards ahead, one band never interfering with another. Occasionally one would stop to hear some exceptionally good fiddler or banjo-picker, or to catch the last verse or two of a favorite song. I stopped once to listen to the sharp tenor singing of a man in a fishing hat, who leaned laconically against his camper where a sign read: “Business? Gone to Hell!” and strummed his mandolin. One morning we were attracted to an unusually large crowd in a grove of trees near the park pavilion. In their midst was a wholesome-looking family seated in lawn chairs making some breathtakingly clean bluegrass: father on guitar, sisters on bass and mandolin, and junior on banjo. Junior, a lad of about thirteen whose

glasses kept slipping down his nose, was picking a series of riffs and runs and slides and chord changes that were literally beyond belief. "He's fantastic!" I said spontaneously to no one in particular.

"He shore is," a rather large man in front of me said dolefully, turning away and heading, I supposed, back to his banjo.

A few came to Bean Blossom, it seemed, only to say that they had been there. A squirrel-hunter from Indianapolis who nearly mowed down our tent when he arrived in the middle of the night hung around his truck, with a bottle of beer perpetually in hand, and never once, for three days, went up to hear the performing bands. "This is mah fift yer at Bean Blossom," he said proudly. "Used t'be held up awn Birch Monroe's farm up chere the road bout two mile. You know got too big fer thet." Birch Monroe was Bill's older brother and on the previous night he had fiddled his way through a veritable briar patch of old-timey tunes. "Ahm from Kentuck, originally," the squirrel-hunter added, redundantly.

On Thursday afternoon one of the first major events, the banjo-pickers' contest, was held in the pavilion. The youngest contestant, about nine, whose banjo was perhaps an inch shorter than he was, raced through "Reuben" as nimbly as a typist typing. A mustachioed college dropout who had built his own banjo, including the delicately cut mother-of-pearl inlays, the carved neck, and the inlaid presidential eagle on the back, appeared on stage alone (the others brought guitar accompaniment) and played an original piece called, I think, "Fox Run."

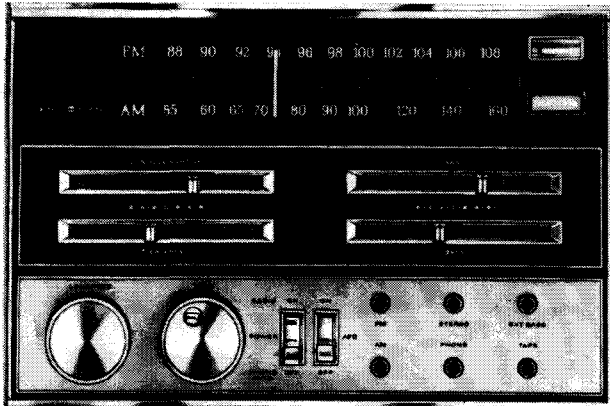
Every bluegrass banjo-picker is ultimately indebted to the man who played banjo with Bill Monroe's original Bluegrass Boys—Earl Scruggs. Scruggs had developed out of the old "drop-thumb" style of banjo-picking a three-finger syncopated style so compelling that audiences still bounce on their haunches listening to it, even youngsters nurtured on electric rock. At Bean Blossom nearly every competitor played at least one tune worked into the style from traditional melodies by Earl Scruggs himself, and although the Scruggs-style of banjo-picking has been much elaborated since the early days of the music, specialization having overtaken even bluegrass, it seemed to me that the contest was won almost solely on the winner's capacity—and it was considerable—to bring Earl Scruggs to mind.

Through Thursday, Friday, and well into mid-afternoon on Saturday, people continued to arrive. Tight but adequate parking spaces appeared for them as if by magic. Bill Monroe and his fiddler Kenny Baker, along with some volunteers, worked most of the day digging postholes and stringing new fence in order to expand the available camping space. By Friday at supertime, when the park was filled with people and with music, a sense of rich promise pervaded everything. A walk to the gate

would show that the name bands—Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, Don Reno, Bill Harrell and the Tennessee Cut-Ups, Jim and Jesse and the Virginia Boys, Jimmy Martin and the Sunny Mountain Boys—had begun to arrive in their lettered buses. All the young banjo-pickers, mandolin-chunkers, and high lonesome screamers of the preceding three days took on the obsolescence of a just-read novel. Even the Brown County Boys, a group of fifteen-year-olds from five miles down the road who had astonished everyone with their cool skill, faded behind the presence of storied professionals, who might be seen walking about, or standing in conversation (often slightly plumper than record album covers showed), or signing autographs. Lester Flatt ambled by me wearing a red-white-and-blue hand-painted tie. Don Reno, whom I had seen at the University of Chicago Folk Festival three years before with silver-white hair, now sported a wavy auburn pompadour. He still had those fancy white cowboy boots that I recall were the envy of a Blackstone Ranger who happened to be hanging around the university coffee shop.

The authentic beginnings of the festival took place that evening around the gate of the park. Bill Monroe had organized what in five years had become a tradition—he called it the "sunset jam session." Everyone who dreams of playing bluegrass with Bill Monroe here found his opportunity. In the confines of a small grassy area defined by a clothesline hung across temporary posts, Bill had gathered with upwards of one hundred and twenty guitar-, banjo-, and mandolin-pickers, fiddlers, and singers to play and sing, into three widely spaced mikes wired to a sound truck, songs and tunes from the Bill Monroe canon which *everyone* knew by heart. Knew, that is, in an absolute, liturgical sense. Clustered around Bill in his gleaming white jacket and white cowboy hat were the very young, amateurs and professionals, musicians who had learned under Monroe, played in his band, and had gone off to make their own reputations, and those who hoped eventually to record and carry on Bill Monroe's music themselves. Bill administered each number, singing and playing into one of the mikes, dropping behind and inviting a stranger or a friend to sing or play a bit, or with the palm of his hand gently prodding a shy and thrilled youngster to play a hesitating but thoroughly satisfying instrumental solo. "I call you all my children," Bill said, and suddenly it became clear that this bluegrass festival was nothing more or less than an old-time camp meeting, an evangelical retreat of the very kind that rural folk a century ago waited all summer for, yet now somehow enlightened beyond dogma, hellfire, and exploitation. And here was Bill Monroe the teacher, founder of the brotherhood and sisterhood, standing among all the picking and singing like John Wesley on the green of an eighteenth-century English village. That night, when someone in the audience asked the highly talented mandolin-

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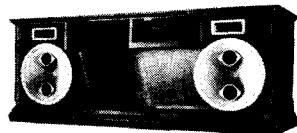


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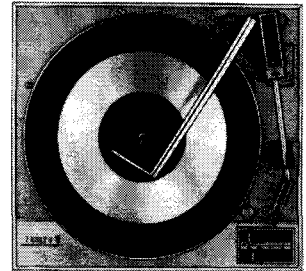
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HOW ALUMINUM CAN HELP PAY OUR \$5 BILLION GARBAGE BILL.



Aluminum's high scrap value can be used to reduce the size and cost of our national waste pile. Reynolds has already started the job.

In 1967, Americans generated enough garbage to cover half the state of Connecticut with a foot-deep layer. It costs some of our large cities nearly a half million dollars a day to dispose of their refuse. The pile gets

bigger year after year, and we're fast running out of places to put it.

Looking at facts like these, Reynolds Metals Company launched a program several years ago to salvage used aluminum cans and other aluminum household scrap—even though aluminum accounts for less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% of the nation's garbage.

The idea was to pay people or groups 10¢ per pound for aluminum which they bring to Reynolds reclamation centers. There, the scrap

is processed and shipped to other Reynolds facilities where it is "recycled" back into usable aluminum sheet, plate or other mill products.

Reynolds helps put "recycling" into the ecology dictionary.

Reynolds recycling program helps do two important jobs: It conserves valuable national resources, and helps with our litter and solid waste disposal problems.



One of Reynolds Mobile Reclamation Units to aid collection of all-aluminum cans.

The program is working: The aluminum industry has recycled over a billion cans, three-fourths of which were recycled in 1971 alone. More than \$4.3 million were paid to the American consumer for this metal—with no municipal disposal cost.

Reynolds now operates 13 permanent reclamation plants and 11 mobile collection units. In addition, other leading companies, chiefly beverage manufacturers and distributors, are working with us in this effort to pick up and recycle every possible pound of household scrap aluminum. Today, there is a network of more than 633 satellite centers in 31 states.

Some of the companies working with Reynolds in collecting and recycling aluminum cans.

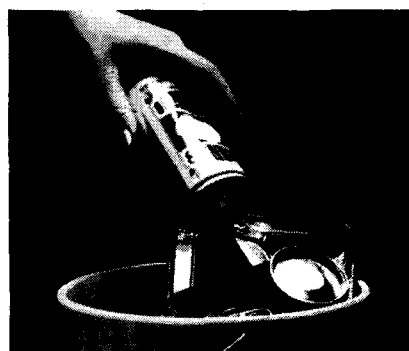
Adolph Coors Company
Anheuser-Busch, Inc.
P. Ballantine & Sons
Blitz-Weinhard Company
Carling Brewing Company
Falstaff Brewing Corporation
Jos. Schlitz Brewing Company
Theo. Hamm Company
Miller Brewing Company
Mobil Oil Corp.
Olympia Brewing Company
Pepsi-Cola Company
Piel Bros., Inc.
Rainier Brewing Company
The Coca-Cola Company
Union Oil Co. of California

What makes the effort work is the basic value of aluminum. Scrap aluminum is worth \$200 a ton; other common packaging materials are worth only \$16 to \$20 a ton.

Because of this, we feel our can collection program is just the start of much larger and more effective attacks on the nation's solid waste disposal problem.

Aluminum's value can help pay for the recycling of much of the solid waste this country generates. Here, for example, are a few of the approaches Reynolds is involved in:

Will the homemaker separate?



If housewives would separate recyclable materials from the rest of their daily trash, municipal refuse disposal costs would be greatly reduced, and recycling could be that much easier. It is estimated that if 1,000 households separated waste paper, aluminum cans, and glass bottles for recycling programs rather than throwing them away, a community could save over \$50,000 in a year.

• Reynolds is now working with communities in Florida and California, providing free plastic bags to encourage household separation of waste. The goal is to see if the value of the aluminum will pay for part of the collection service.

Working with B.I.R.P. and cities.

• In Phoenix, Reynolds is part of the Beverage Industry Recycling Program (B.I.R.P.), helping to operate a model facility that is recycling aluminum, glass, and steel.

• We're talking with school systems about plans to collect used

aluminum containers and foil from their cafeterias, the proceeds to help pay for school operations.

• In the San Francisco area, we're one of nine companies and municipalities planning a new, sophisticated reclamation plant. Here, aluminum, steel, paper, and glass raw materials will be separated automatically from mixed municipal garbage.

• Through the Aluminum Association, we've helped develop plans for garbage processing plants that could help pay for themselves by recovering aluminum and other raw materials. They would also produce valuable chemicals, fertilizers, animal feeds, and steam power.

Garbage in. Valuable raw materials out.



Non-Ferrous Metals	Aluminum Copper Zinc
Ferrous Metals	New Iron & Steel products Scrap for use in copper industry
Food Waste, Sewage, Sludge	Soil Conditioners Organic Fertilizer
Contaminated Paper, Plastics	Fuel for generating steam & electricity
Pure Paper	New Paper Products
Glass	Paving Material Bricks, Block, Structural Shapes

The American standard of living is creating a garbage pile that is now a national problem. But the value of aluminum in the garbage could turn this national problem into a national asset. To learn more about what Reynolds is doing, write Dr. Robert F. Testin, Director of Environmental Planning, Reynolds Metals Company, P.O. Box 27003-LP, Richmond, Va. 23261. The men and women at Reynolds are always interested in your comments and suggestions.



picker for the Brown County Boys to play "Rawhide," an instrumental created by Bill Monroe and requiring incredible dexterity in both hands, the young man drawled, "Naw, let's leave that one for the Master."

And why shouldn't it be so? It is the province of a religious teacher to restore a private and inward dimension to people whose lives have become dominated by outward forms and thus by the hypocrisy and cant which inevitably result—to freshen "the individual value of every soul." This is, I believe, what Bill Monroe accomplished for his people through the agency of their music, music being their most characteristic and most articulate mode of expression, the prime embodiment of the mountain imagination. Thus he became for mountain people, who, like

other rural societies, have tended to move more slowly and deliberately through history than the rest of the world, the first modern man.

Ihesitate to use the sociological term "subculture," since the people out of whom bluegrass music originated and to whom it is addressed are not, in my opinion, subordinate to American culture as a whole (assuming there is such a thing as American culture as a whole). They are certainly a "people," however, with ties more fundamental than the music itself, though the music may be, *like* a religion, that common body of knowledge, ceremony, and experience which makes their unity self-conscious and serviceable because it has been outwardly expressed. In the broadest sense, inclusive of the gospel and string music which preceded it, bluegrass music is perhaps one of the largest surviving finds of traditional knowledge in the country outside of Indian lore and religion itself. As such it is bound up with larger attitudes and beliefs axiomatic with the people and especially with their special, almost heretical variety of protestant Christianity which, along with the music, reveals the unique way of appreciating life they as individuals hold in common.

Over fifty bands, amateur and professional, not to mention a great number of individual fiddlers, banjo and guitar-pickers, appeared on stage at Bean Blossom. Many more performed who never stepped onto the stage but who entertained hundreds passing by. Every novice and amateur band, even some of the plodders, was received with enthusiasm. Bill Monroe's people are warmly hospitable and emotional, deeply appreciative of fellow feeling.

These emotional qualities are still more pronounced in bluegrass musicians themselves, who have a reputation for intensity and unpredictability. I heard of one accomplished guitarist who abandoned the instrument altogether when his guitar was stolen, insisting that it would be a kind of betrayal to play a strange guitar, and took up mandolin. Another fine singer of my acquaintance refuses to sing anything but sacred songs. In short, there is a kind of mysticism in bluegrass music. In its subject matter, in its performers and their performances, even in its most antic moods, it is pervaded by death. Often it is actually about death, in pious, morbid, or sentimental ways; murder ballads and tales of death on the railroad or highway are, of course, nearly synonymous with traditional music. One of Bill Monroe's most famous songs, "Footprints in the Snow," seems even to celebrate death, since it foretells of the reunion in heaven of a man with his departed wife, whom he met "when the snow was on the ground." The symbolic association of snow and death is, I think, lost on no one; yet the tune is lilting, joyous—confidence in the promised land is so lucid and steadfast that it is

Ralph Stanley, center, is joined by two young players, Rick Skaggs, left, and Keith Whitley, right.



the implied subject of nearly every "sacred" number, and seems to underlie every serious treatment of life. Bill Monroe's voice, with its high lonesome pang, seems sometimes to come from beyond the grave, not from some dreary underworld, but from some bright, bucolic mountain paradise.

One man seems most significant of all in this respect: Ralph Stanley. If Bill Monroe's voice sounds like the wind, Ralph Stanley's sounds like the woods. He and his brother Carter came out of the Clinch Mountains in the late forties playing and singing in a style strangely steeped in an ancient mountain modality which persisted even after they had acquired the habits of bluegrass. Not long after a performance at Bean Blossom several years ago, Carter Stanley died; Ralph continues to play the music of the Stanley Brothers and the Clinch Mountain Boys, and has found a series of guitarists who can virtually duplicate Carter's singing and playing, so that to hear Ralph's new band is to feel that Carter has been reincarnated.

But the queer phenomenon of calling up the dead past goes still further in Ralph's band. Two young Kentucky musicians, aged seventeen and eighteen, who last year created a sensation by playing and singing in an absolutely perfect imitation of the early Stanley Brothers, are now regular members of the Clinch Mountain Boys. To hear the whole group, then, is to hear not only Ralph and Carter Stanley but also a kind of geological record of their career, collapsed into some of the most hair-raising and beautiful harmonies in any music. Ralph's voice is not perfect; there is a slight quaver in it, and a laurel twig. But it can stir up matter at the primitive floor of the soul with as much authority as a Navajo chant.

Ralph is an earnest man, showing the kind of steady watchfulness and complete absence of frivolity that we associate either with deep piety or with fear. In concert he makes much of Carter's grave, its situation on a hillside, the headstone, the epitaph—his interest is almost medieval in its fondness. At Bean Blossom he did a monologue about their musical life together, backed up by a weird reincarnation of the old Stanley Brothers singing a gospel song. Ralph seems to sing in the expectation of death, with dread nobly penetrated by creative necessity. Or it is possible that his zeal arises out of a slender doubt:

As the years roll by, I often wonder—
Will we all be together someday?
Each night as I wander through the graveyard
Darkness finds me as I kneel to pray.¹

At its worst the death motif in bluegrass music acquires an effete morbidity. A most interesting and appropriately named group, James Monroe and the

Midnight Ramblers, capture in their music a funereal quality highlighted by a range of imagery reminiscent of Petrarch's Tuscany. Replete with fields of lilies, bloodstained veils, and dark impulses, it is a world of the dead.

James Monroe has a corpse-like pallor and shadowy eyes; his music has the eerie loveliness of an Easter basket or a funeral wreath. Unlike most bluegrass bands, his is unaggressive and obsequious, the fiddler offering mournful, sustained condolences, the banjo-picker politely lingering in the background. His lyrics are ambiguously situated between dream and reality, and thus symbolic: virginal figures drift through in white, wanderers recline on green lawns or pause at crossroads. In one moving ballad called "I Haven't Seen Mary in Years," the singer is led after a life of profligacy to a meadow where a family reunion is being held. There he sees his father, who does not recognize him because of his changed appearance, and his mother, whom the singer cannot recognize, explaining in the concluding line of the song, "I haven't seen mother in years." Mother! All along we have assumed that Mary is a lost wife, but now wife and mother are confounded with all the straightforwardness of a textbook in intermediate psychology. James Monroe's ladies are almost always named Mary, recalling Anglo-Saxon hymns to the Virgin; when we expect him to sing "my life," he sings "my dream," and in many respects he himself seems a dream, a ghost. Incidentally, he is Bill Monroe's son.

The deepest allegiances in bluegrass, then, are to Mother and Dad, to home, in a way that few of us have had the privilege of feeling. Some of the most frequent subjects in serious pieces are the death of parents and of children, the regret over having left home, the reunion in heaven. All are, of course, one, and together make a kind of rude cosmology. The imagination of a poor and isolated people ranges only as far as their own experience, so that the natural life provides material for their deepest insights. It is thrifty and practical, intellectually speaking, to associate eternity with the better world of childhood; the stories in traditional music of lost souls who return home only to find parents gone, pathways overgrown, and the fields turned brown make good figures for life itself, "life's railway to heaven," with its drift away from innocence. Death, being wholly dark behind, becomes a kind of twist in the fabric of things by which everything returns to itself. There is the less mysterious explanation, of course, that when life is wretched—as it no doubt was (and is) for many poor mountain folk—the mind clings to fantasy worlds. A sense of individuality also implies a sense of one's own finiteness. But the themes of bluegrass music transcend simple otherworldliness, and at best they are genuinely metaphysical. The same sentiments churned out in Nashville and hawked on the air by sincere-sounding disc jockeys can turn the stomach.

¹From "White Dove." Copyright 1949 by Peer International Corporation. Used by permission.

I suspect, however, that many of Bill Monroe's people are suffering a subtle death they can't detect, a gradual impoverishment different from the kind which, over the generations, they have learned to live with. As technology penetrates their isolation, and American prosperity, however hollow it may be, their poverty, the way of life which created the music and which continued to cultivate an imagination receptive to it eventually dissolves and disappears. They are dying as a people as they become assimilated into the great mass of middle-class Americans who crowd the roads and parks in the summertime and who have discovered that one way to relieve some of the pang of existence is to diminish the intensity of life. And as the scope and depth of their lives shrink, so will the music seem more distant: too emotional, too rigid, too . . . well, hillbilly. The ecstasy of which the music is often capable will be gone too.

The fact is that Bill Monroe's people themselves feel that they are preserving something of the past. They call it the "old-time music." Bluegrass musicians are constantly giving awards to one another for preserving it. Possessed in this way of a historical sense, death, time's instrument, becomes a matter of intense interest to them. As the late Johan Huizinga pointed out in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, a consciousness of the past, awakened in the medieval mind by scholarship, produced a pervasive melancholy over the transitory quality in men and the world. Artistically this meant an obsession with death, in its early physical signs and in the corruption of the flesh which follows. Bluegrass folk, surrounded by a civilization which advertises its material advantages and falsely represents its values as the same ones they hold dear, are secretly persuaded by it, and so indulge the waning habits like an old clock or a failing grandparent. The sublime becomes quaint. The essential becomes recreation, and it's a proud man who can make up a bluegrass band out of mere children, with a six-year-old on the five-string.

Yet in all this there is a massive contradiction. Though death is often present in the music, Bean Blossom was astonishingly alive. Bluegrass music is as fresh as if it had been born yesterday, and as full of surprises. In fact, it must be said that the show was deftly stolen by a brand-new group out of Louisville who call themselves The Bluegrass Alliance. More children? Nope. Hippies. Hippies, that is, with the one exception of Lonnie Peerce, a twenty-year veteran of the fiddle. "I suppose you folks wonder why

Lonnie here is playing with a bunch of freaks," the bassist, Ebo Walker, asked the audience. Hoots, howls, and hollers. "I'm their social worker," Lonnie answered, and started fiddling. They all started in, banjo-picker picking, mandolin-picker picking and jiving around the stage, hair hanging to his shoulders, making it seem as though we were watching the Jefferson Airplane and not some bluegrass group. Finally the lead singer, who from a distance might have been a prim old maid with hair severely tied behind her head, opened up with a voice that was pure gold bullion, something like three trumpets blowing two octaves above middle C in a tiled shower room. The crowd went wild. "We'll be selling some albums back at our bus," Ebo said. "Bring 'em back if you have any trouble with 'em—they're on Oral Roberts label, and we have a little problem with the holes healing up." Laughter, some muffled protests. "I see we got both sides here tonight."

The folks loved them on Thursday night, on Friday night; and on Saturday, when they were not originally scheduled to play, they brought the house, or rather the treetops, down with "One Tin Soldier," a song very different from most in bluegrass:

Go ahead and hate your neighbor
Go ahead and cheat your friend
Do it in the name of heaven
Justify it in the end.
There won't be trumpets blowin'
On the Judgment Day:
On the bloody morning after
One tin soldier rides away.²

The point is that while some folks may be growing away from the music, others are growing toward it, and it may be that even those for whom it is a native idiom are beginning to awaken to their own traditions, the way blacks and American Indians are to theirs, to what they created while the business of living went steadily on. However at odds the members of the Bluegrass Alliance may be with their audience upon any other issue but bluegrass, on that one they have come to a profound agreement. Bluegrass music is the traditional life, a kind of knowing many of us have difficulty in understanding, and the traditional life is the sacramental life. We who live among dead things should wonder at a people who, though they dwell upon death, have not forgotten how to live. □

²From "One Tin Soldier." Copyright 1969 and 1971 by Trousdale Music. Lyrics reprinted by permission.

OLD VOICES

by Leslie Norris

First the one bell, heavy, behind it
Centuries of controlled certainty, swung
With an enormous sound past
The kneeling city; it is the first
Heard stone in an architecture of ringing.
And sung in at built intervals, at
The joint of locked structure, the voice
Of the second bell. The foundation is

Set on unimpeded air. An age
Of cut stone and iron—those old
Technologies—has its immense medieval
Tongues bellowing again. Now all
The small bells filigree and stretch
A long nave in the ear and a pulled
Spire of sailing clamor. Resonant
Cathedrals of listening are launched

On the open day. But bells are not
Peaceful; are arrogant with the complete
World of their origin. Think, imagine,
In the clack of swords they began,
Short on their own shields the flat beat
Struck, so that erratic courage set
Hard in the metal; then the high edge,
Turning in the urgency of the charge,

Rang through the skulls of wives
At their keen mourning. Hacking the bent
Angles of helmets, rough blades cracked again
The wombs that bore these splintered heads
In their early down. From such sounds,
From the held quiet after, the brazen
Complexities of the loud tower grew.
There was time for the patterns of victory.

And space on the fat plains of grain
For building of flawless bells. The lost
In their slate hills had tongues only,
Grew old in the slow labor
Of changing myths. Through the mist
Of altering voices their stories spun,
Through generations of telling. Spiral
Images from the belfries, the metal

Confection of chiming, are not
For the mountains. Old men tell
Of an impermanent peace, a fragile
Faith is passed through the narrative
Villages in syllables of live
Whispers. Foolish now to regret
Centuries of locked exile. It happened.
We have heads full of easy legend

And elegies like the cold sun
Of treeless autumn. I carry
Such tunes in my head like the thin
Silence the bells hang in. But from
These reaching fields my surnamed
Fathers came, the great cathedrals
Counted them. I walk their lanes,
My shoes cover the concave stones

Worn by their slow tolling.
If I speak with the quick brooks
Of the permanent hills, in my saying
See hordes of the dark tribes stand,
Their faces hidden, my hand
In its perfect glove of skin holds
Other ghosts. We step the streets
Uneasily, disturbed by bells.



AN EYE FOR AN EYE

A story by Milovan Djilas

I was no different in any way from the other peasants in my village. I was a man and a Serb, like other men and Serbs.

I had no schooling except four grades of elementary school which I had finished at Toplica before my father moved to the Bačka, where he had been granted some land as a veteran of the Salonika front. My grandfather, like many of the men of Toplica, had settled there from Montenegro, but when his sons divided his property, each got so small a parcel of land that they had to hire themselves out as day laborers. Had it not been for the war and the collapse of Austria-Hungary, I also would have been nothing more than a day laborer, unless I could have managed to pick up the rudiments of some craft.

We lived well in the Bačka. I was twelve years old when we settled there in 1920, and I quickly adapted myself to the new conditions. By the time I became a young man I differed in no way from the Serbs of the Bačka—perhaps a little in accent, and my father still kept up some of the old habits and customs. In the Bačka the land is more fertile than anywhere else on earth; it demands hard work but it returns a good yield. I will not say that I was among the most industrious. That, no! But I was not lazy. I loved to go to the tavern on Sundays, as did the others, but more because of the dancing and the talk than the drink. I was no drunkard. Nor was I a womanizer—there were plenty of those—though I won't say that I did not enjoy myself now and then. And cards and dice never interested me. I was quiet and moderate and never long at odds with anyone; nor did I fly into a rage unless someone tried to kick me in the face. I was pious. I never blasphemed God and his saints. Even now I keep my *slava* and celebrate Christmas and all our other Serb Orthodox feasts.

I had no luck in marriage. My father arranged a marriage for me in our native district, but my bride

fell ill with consumption as soon as she came to the Bačka—different water and different climate—and soon died. She had had no children, for which the poor girl had tormented herself and me. After her death I did not marry again. The local girls did not willingly marry colonists, and I could find women enough. So I grew to a man's years and awaited the war, always postponing marriage from one day to the next.

The war turned everything upside down. Nothing was left of our life before it, or of my plans for the future. The war, so to speak, turned me upside down too. It did not change me, nor did it change others, but it forced me to live on the other side of the coin. It was as if I had never known myself until then. Or others, either. It seemed as if the war had come so that everyone would cease to know himself or others; or, to put it another way, the snow falls so that beasts will reveal their tracks.

Ours was a mixed village—old Serb settlers, Hungarians, and we Serb colonists. So we were always divided in everything, except that we colonists always sided with the local Serbs against the Hungarians whenever there was anything political in question. There were no great antipathies. It was more like neighbors who quarrel and yet love each other. We were guests of the Hungarians and they of us; we were friendly and helped each other. And though all of us held firmly to our own faiths, it happened occasionally that a Serb would marry a Magyar girl or a Hungarian a Serb girl. But that, too, was as it should be between neighbors. Sometimes it even seemed comic to me when my father said: "Don't trust the Magyars. Just let them catch fire once and you will see what they will do." Later, I often remembered his words, for so it turned out: men can be seen as they are only when they have the chance to do to others whatever they have a mind to.

I might have expected every sort of evil from the war, but that our Hungarian neighbors, with whom we had eaten and drunk, made merry and shared our sorrows, should so turn against us—that I did not expect.

They and their occupation authorities first of all, and most violently, vented their fury upon us colonists. Because of the land and God only knows what else! They held that the lands of the nobles which our state had parceled out after the First World War should have been theirs, for until then it had been Hungarian peasants who had worked the land—and that would have been fair enough if their state had not lost the war. Now they were only waiting to snatch the land from us. For my father, the loss of his house and property was not too hard to bear; war had given them to him, and war had taken them away again. But for me it was. I could not reconcile myself. It was as if I had lost my life as well, and as if all my life had been spent in vain. If only our Magyar neighbors had been content with taking our property from us! But with what hatred and enjoyment they took it, while doing all they could to humiliate and oppress us! Some of them at once joined the Magyar gendarmerie and thus had power over us. They were the worst. There was no authority above them, nothing to restrain them.

Our next-door neighbor Janos seized our house and property, though we had always been on friendly terms. He had his own house and land, but they were not enough for him, and he installed one of his sons and himself in ours. My father was in no hurry to leave his home, so Janos kicked him out with his jackboots and stood, short and dark, in front of the open door, snarling: "It's been yours long enough; now our turn has come!" I said to him, my mouth dry and the words sticking in my throat: "Good brother Janos. Your turn has come, but why beat my father?" And he: "He ought to be beaten and killed. Until we wipe out all you Serbs, there is no existence for us Magyars." And I again to him: "But we neither beat nor killed you Magyars." And he: "You couldn't. You didn't dare to because of the Great Powers. But we can. The Great Powers will help us do it." My father said nothing. He was no less angry and embittered than I. But it all seemed comprehensible to him, and I could have sworn that he was thinking to himself: Magyar Janos is right. It so happens that he can do as he likes, but in our case we cannot do as we like.

Most of the colonists, without land and in fear for their lives, fled to Serbia. My father, too, wanted to go, but I would not let him. I would not leave the land even though it was no longer ours. It is hard to leave something on which a man has spent his life and strength. We remained, therefore, in a local Serbian household. I worked as a day laborer to feed myself and my father. But in wartime everything turns out differently from what a man dreams and plans.

In August, 1941, the Hungarians began to collect the Serbs to send them to camps, now from one village, now from another, until our turn came. They made a selection from the local Serbs, usually the most prominent among them, and took us colonists to a man. This evil took us somewhat by surprise, although we had been expecting it; not even those who had said that our village would be overlooked had really believed it. Early in the morning of August 17 they drove us, whenever and however they found us, into the courtyard of the municipal building—women, children, and old people as well. There they sorted us out, as they would have cattle—the young from the old, the children from the adults—and put us in various groups.

They separated me from my father—we were never to meet again—and I heard later that the old man had never reached the camp at all. He fell by the way and was beaten to death.

As for me, still strong and able to work, I was put with the younger ones in the courtyard of some village worthy's house. His family, too, had been collected for the camp. There were about fifty of us, some men, some women, but mainly men. They lined us men up against the courtyard wall—we thought they were going to kill us—and the women, all the young girls and married women, they lined up against the house wall so that we could look at them, but we were forbidden to speak to them. It was, I remember, a very hot, stifling day, yet they would not give us water although there was a well in the courtyard. But we forgot our thirst and our misfortunes, even forgot that we expected to be killed, when we saw the shame that took place before our eyes.

At the end of the courtyard there was an extensive stable with a door wide enough to admit a hay cart; such stables were common all over the Danube plain. There, in that stable, they began to rape our women, the Serb girls and the young married women.

They did not shut the stable doors, but left them wide open. Intentionally! When one of the soldiers wanted to shut them, an NCO shouted at him: "Don't shut them, clot! Let these Serb brigands see how we improve their stock!"

Even though we realized what was happening, we did not want to believe it. First they threw down hay from the hayloft and spread it out on the floor of the stable so that it would be soft and they would not dirty their knees. This and everything else they did conscientiously and without haste, as if preparing some especially important task, like some—may God forgive me!—rite in which every detail must be exact and properly carried out. They even brought a basin and a jug of water to wash themselves afterward, so that their uniforms would not be stained and everything would seem as much as possible like a real act of love, for which married couples or older lovers prepare every comfort and remove every obstacle beforehand, aware of the enjoyment that awaits them.

First of all they set aside two girls, the youngest

and prettiest—one was the daughter of the master of the house and the other the sister of my good friend Mitar—and took them into the house for the officers. Right up to that moment we had been of two minds about what would happen; until then they had behaved severely toward us, but without brutality and oppression. We might even have believed that they were taking the two girls in for some sort of interrogation had not one of the officers, young, dark, and short, greeted the householder's daughter at the doorway with a crooked, silly smirk. The girls, too, had not realized or were unable to believe. They went in without resistance, though pale and embarrassed. Soon the sound of a struggle, blows, and commotion could be heard from one of the rooms; the householder's daughter was defending herself. Probably she could not conceive that they would do such a thing in her own house—and she was by nature untamed. From Mitar's sister in the other room there was not a sound; probably she was numb with fear and horror.

Yes, each one of us knew what was happening in the house, right there in front of us, even had the windows not been open. But we kept silent, pretending to ourselves that we did not know what it was all about, and in truth, we would not have been able to look each other in the eye. I glanced at Mitar, but he did not wish, did not dare, to look at me. He behaved as if it were not his sister there inside, and as if he did not suspect what was being done to her. The householder's daughter was finally overpowered. A soldier went in to help the officer, and we could hear panting and struggling, like someone choking, and not long afterward a submissive sobbing.

The Hungarians behaved as if they knew we were glad that we could not see what was happening. The sergeant, red-faced and with upturned mustaches, ordered two of the gendarmes to bring Mara, the wife of Jakov, a colonist from my district. From then on that sergeant took charge of everything, and everything that took place later was at his command. I could not understand how men could carry out such orders. One of the gendarmes, a youth with fair, almost white, hair, refused, and the sergeant sneered: "What! Not up to it yet?" and ordered another man to come.

But Mara protested: "I will never allow anyone except my man, while I am alive!" The gendarme struck her on the breast with his rifle butt. She fell winded to the ground, and he dragged her by the arms across the courtyard. Jakov could not control himself; perhaps shame drove him—and we were not yet accustomed to what was happening. He rushed to the aid of his wife. But he did not reach her; the sergeant fired a shot into his back. Jakov gasped, turned and looked at his murderer with disbelief, then put his hands to his breast. Blood spurted from between his fingers and he fell. The sergeant went up to him, swearing as only Magyars know how to swear, and since Jakov was still rolling his eyes, fired a shot into

his chest, probably into his heart. When Jakov still did not die, he fired yet another shot, into his head, and the skull split open and the brains poured out on the flagstones.

I remember those first details with unusual clarity. What happened later I have forgotten, and in fact there was not much to remember. Everything was a repetition of what happened to Jakov's Mara, only not all of the women protested and not one of their brothers or husbands dared to go to their aid. Not because we were afraid—I don't think any of us feared death—but because resistance was pointless, and we would have died vainly and absurdly.

The gendarmes relieved each other by command. When all those in the courtyard had had their turn, others came in from the street; although different in appearance, they all acted in the same manner and afterward looked the same, as if gloating and yet ashamed. They always went to the stable in pairs, and if any woman resisted, one of them would sit on her head and hold her arms stretched out on the ground, his back turned, and look down so as not to hinder the other in his shameful task. They did everything skillfully and methodically, not sparing blows, looking at those in front of them—and perhaps not even looking at them—as if they were under orders. If it so happened—and it did happen—that one of the women, realizing the uselessness of resistance, gave way to her fate, the other gendarme would wait, watching with enjoyment what his mate was doing and urging him on with shameful jests.

So it went on—I have no idea how long—until everyone had been satisfied, and all the women had been raped. But the truth must be told: there were some who, like the fair-haired boy, did not want to, or could not, take part. The married women, I would say, bore it the more easily, and even among the girls there was not so much shame as impotent grief. Weeping and entreaties only excited the gendarmes, and I noticed that they fell most willingly upon the girls, but I would not say that this was because they were afforded any greater enjoyment, but because it confirmed their power and authority more definitely. The sergeant, after he had satisfied himself with one of the girls, delivered a little speech to mark the occasion: "We have taken your land and dismembered your state, and now we have conquered your women, too!"

When it was over, there was a silence more agonizing than all that had gone before. The gendarmes began to eat—the house was full of food—and they allowed us to sit and mingle with the women.

They threw the householder's daughter out of the house, and she, bloody and disheveled, began to scream and curse them. They belabored her with their rifle butts and threw horseshoes at her as long as she made any sound. I heard that she died later from her contusions.

Mitar's sister also came out of the house, crumpled and disordered, bruised and dazed. After her came Janos' son, Imre, he who with his father had settled in my house, a still-unmarried and powerful youth, like his father in appearance. He had just enlisted in the gendarmerie and did not even have a complete uniform, only shirt and cap. He was buttoning his shirt as he came out, and as if on duty, he turned to Mitar: "As a woman, your sister has no defects. But I prefer more experienced women, so that I don't have to teach them their job." Mitar looked at him calmly, as if they were talking of everyday matters, but his face twitched. I was unable to believe that a neighbor could do such a thing to a neighbor, to a girl with whom he had danced the kolo and who had grown up with him. But so it was, both with our lands and with our women.

Now we looked at each other without shame and even talked to each other—about everything except what had just happened. We wanted to believe, to deceive ourselves, that it had never happened, and still less that the Magyars had done it; we could not recognize them. None of us so much as mentioned what had just taken place. We moved Jakov's corpse aside like some object, and even the sergeant, pouring wine from a flask over slices of sausage, calmed down. Only occasionally a woman whimpered and then quickly became mute under the reproaches of her comrades who were resigned to their shame, and under the feral glances of the conquerors.

Midday passed, and a good part of the afternoon, though I could not say how, or what we did. I remember only that I tried to console Mitar's sister, but she acted as if she were offended and looked angrily at me. I withdrew, thankful that my wife was dead, that my two sisters had died in childhood, that I had no daughters, and that my father had not been there to see the horror and the Serbian shame.

The stifling heat had already lessened when the rumbling of a truck could be heard. Then the gendarmes began to push us into it, not separating the men from the women. They took us to a camp in Hungary, a fair and rich land but an enemy land. Men and women were separated there, though we were able to get in touch with each other and exchange messages—Mitar was regularly in touch with his sister. For the most part they used us for agricultural work on the estates of the nobles. We were deep in their land, near Lake Balaton, and they considered that we had nowhere to escape to and so put few guards over us—about one to every ten, and those mostly old men or invalids. We were not hungry; they fed us so that we could work. But I never reconciled myself to slavery in Hungary.

I could not forget how we Serbs had suffered for hundreds of years, and the blackest days of all were now, just when we had hoped we would be able to live as men should. How long had Montenegro—or so

my grandfather had told me—endured evil! There where there were no songs except laments, and every second hearth had been extinguished. And how Serbia had suffered in the times of Karageorge. And Bosnia, and the Voivodina. We Serbs were fated, I thought, to struggle for bare existence alongside other peoples. As my grandfather had, and his grandfather, and my own father, so, too, must I struggle with my enemy as long as I had breath in me. All this weighed upon me like some talisman, some holy testament, handed down from the distant past, from the unhappy Serbian past. I would have gone to war to fight as best I could, but our rulers had betrayed us, had grown rotten and corrupt in power and lordship and revenge. Even in the camp I thought about how I could fight and struggle, but could not think of any way to do so.

It was soon noised abroad—and written about even in the Hungarian newspapers—that the people in our unhappy land had risen in rebellion and that many of the insurgents had fled into the forests and were attacking from ambushes. The newspapers said that the Communists had started it all, and indeed they had, as I see now. But I was not interested in who the leaders were, only that the time had come for the Serbs to rise. We in the camp began to talk about it, and I made up my mind to escape and to fight against the Hungarians the best I could.

Several of us, including Mitar, agreed to run away. We did not dare confide in the others—there were informers among us, as there always are when a plot is being hatched and wherever force holds men down. And our exploit was made still more difficult because it was autumn, and Mitar wanted, at all costs, to get his sister out, too. So we waited until the spring of 1942. I must admit that we were encouraged—the Germans had not taken Moscow or conquered England, and the newspapers for the hundredth time had liquidated the last insurgent bands in Montenegro and Bosnia.

The Magyars in no way respected our holy days and drove us out to work on Orthodox Easter as if our Saviour had never been crucified and risen again from the dead for us Serbs. I had managed to get hold of a long file, and that morning I had it hidden under my coat—that was the day agreed on for our flight.

About that time, as luck would have it, who should have come to our camp but Imre, the son of my neighbor Janos, who had raped Mitar's sister after the officer finished with her. The Hungarians from Hungary had not cosseted our Hungarians as they had expected. Imre and others had been sent to the eastern front, and he, after being wounded, had been posted to our camp as a guard. Mitar and I planned our flight for a time when it would be Imre's turn to stand guard over us.

He accompanied us on that Easter, and by agreement, as soon as we entered the forest I thrust the file into his stomach. One of our men was killed, but we

were able to seize two rifles. I wanted to beat Imre to death, but Mitar would not let me. He pulled the file out of Imre's guts and with it scooped out his eyes, really scooped them out, not just pierced them, saying: "That is for the pleasure you got from my sister, my good and lovely neighbor!"

All my life, even now, I have never been able to stand the sight of blood or any sort of torture. It was a torment to me to kill a chicken. But what Mitar was doing—he had to hurry before the other guards caught us—filled me with a sort of enjoyment, as if I were intoxicated, and I saw everything clearly. I was only sorry that we could not torture Imre at our ease, taking pleasure in his entreaties and his bloody tears until his soul left his body. For a chicken is an innocent thing, but a man, a Magyar—well, he is guilty of human suffering and Serb misfortune, and it is not right for him to die easily and unaware.

But Mitar held back, or perhaps was horrified at his own deed, so I was forced to cut short Imre's life with my own hands. I just had to, had to experience that also, since there was no other way. I drew the knife I had taken from Imre, seized him by the jaw, and turned him over like a sheep. He no longer seemed to know what was happening—he did not lift a hand in his defense. I called out: "Imre, this is me, your neighbor Stojan, whom you threw out of his home. Now I will cut your throat!" "Slaughter me," he said, "but don't torture me. Have pity on a man's sufferings!" "I would have no more mercy than you had," I said to him, "but we must hurry." Then I pierced him with the knife, but not too deep, so that his life would flow out with his blood and not suffocate in gasps. So I slaughtered him at my ease, and there was nothing terrible in it for me. I even felt pleasure in Imre's warm blood on my hands, before my eyes, and on my soul.

When I think back, I see that we worked unskillfully and hurriedly; later we became more skillful, for killing men becomes a craft like any other. We got too bloodied, and we were surprised that he had not died at once, as soon as I drove the file into his guts. We were afraid that he might still be alive, and though there was no sound from him, and the blood continued to spurt out, I remember that I hacked and hacked with the knife until I had hacked off his head, and even then it seemed to me that the body was still living and the head still conscious. Yes, one must know, one must learn; there is nothing easier than to kill a man if you know the right place to strike, and if he twitches it is of no importance—his arteries are still working and his blood flows—for he is full of blood, and it cannot all flow out in a moment.

We knew where Mitar's sister was working, and that same day we took her away and killed two guards. Counting her, we were now a band of six. I was chosen as leader.

Even had we been able to get there, there was no place for us in the Bačka; there is too much water

there. And the local Hungarians would have risen against us to a man, and because of us would have exterminated the Serbs. So we stayed hidden among the forests and creeks, trying to approach the Danube, since we had heard that on the other side, in Slavonia, there were insurgents. The posses were not especially active, but every Magyar, even the children and women, would have told the authorities about us at once, and we would not have had any food had we not taken it by force. Thus began a most terrible life. All men, all Magyars, were against us, not because the authorities and the police made them so but of their own free will. They could not bear us to be living there alongside them.

We hated the Magyars. But not one of us ever said that we had to kill them all—children, women, old people. That came somehow of itself, from the conditions in which we lived and fought, and also from our memories of the Serb misfortunes. There was no life for a Serb as long as the Magyars were the stronger. First we killed a little girl—so that she could not betray us when we left. Then we cut the throats of a forester's whole family; they had caught sight of us when we came on their house unexpectedly, and we had to save ammunition. The child in the cradle we wanted to forget, but the only one of us who had until then been aghast at the killings reminded us: "How can we leave it, without father or mother? And this is that sort of struggle—to the last man, either ours or theirs." So we cut the child's throat, and it, too, was, as we put it, weaned.

We found countless good reasons for slaughtering the Magyars to a man. Most frequently we stressed: The fewer Magyars, the more Serbs. And quickly we revealed this unspoken reason: There is no real enjoyment in killing the enemy until you can feel his life ebbing away under your hand, and you can achieve that in the simplest and easiest manner—by cutting his throat. We enjoyed the terror we spread around us, the horror with which we were recognized, and the curses that accompanied us. But man quickly becomes satiated with every enjoyment, even killing, and so we thought of new ways. We wanted to become the devil in the eyes of the Magyars, and we were only too happy to do so, believing that God himself had directed us to avenge the Serbs and at the same time to pleasure our own hearts.

It came to rape almost by chance, without any real reason. In the forest we came across a shepherd girl scarcely fifteen years old. We intended to cut her throat, nothing more. I noticed lust in the eyes of my companions, but they did not say anything; either they were ashamed or their desire was not very strong. Mitar's sister urged us on: "What sort of men are you! Have you forgotten what they did to us?" The shepherd girl did not understand Serbian and looked at us in terror; we had already made it known who we were. She thought that we meant to kill her and began to implore us to spare her life. She did not guess what we intended to do, and none of us had yet

made up his mind to be the first. Then one said: "Give her to me. I'll have a go." Realizing at last what we had been talking about, the shepherd girl seemed to forget that her life was at stake and began to resist. But Mitar struck her with a rifle butt and knocked the wind out of her. We pulled her down and sat on her head, stretching her arms out on the ground, just as the Magyars had done with our own women. We took her in turn, but without any enjoyment. Mitar's sister kept guard. We felt awkward in front of her, but I believe that she secretly watched and even enjoyed it all. It excited and pleased us that we could do whatever we liked to the Magyar girls, even what a man and a woman do together only with good will. It excited us that we no longer had to be like men with a Magyar girl, but could be like beasts who pay no heed to the powerless female's wishes.

There was one of us who did not want to, or could not, though he was young and strong. And the helpless shepherd girl would have remained lying there, uncovered and bloody, had not Mitar said: "She will betray us in any case. We must kill her." But it was unpleasant for us to do so, after the pleasure we had had from her. Then Mitar's sister said: "Surely you won't let her conceive a Serb child?" So I waved my knife, and the girl screamed as I thrust it into her entrails. We fled, leaving her to die.

We went on like that, slaughtering all we met, raping, burning—men, women, cattle, and property. The posses became more frequent, giving us not a moment's breathing space. If in our flight we had not come across a Serb village near Baja where we found shelter, we would soon have been destroyed. That, too, happened by chance. We were uneducated and did not know that there were, that there could be, Serbs in Hungary. We usually passed the night where we were least expected, concealed in some forest, resting and reconnoitering. Selecting an isolated house, we would kill the inmates, take whatever we needed, and then disappear as quickly and as far away as we could. So when on one occasion, on the outskirts of a village, we came upon a house with our Orthodox icons and a *kandilo* burning before Sveti Nikola, we looked and wondered. Speaking in Magyar, as we always did except among ourselves, in order to hide our tracks more easily, we asked: "Where did you get those icons?" The householder replied, also in Hungarian: "We are Serbs, Orthodox." "Serbs? How can there be Serbs in Hungary?" But so it turned out. We began to speak in Serbian, and they spoke good Serbian. Then we asked them about Kosovo and our Serb rulers and our Serb saints. They knew about them, and they knew all the *slava* customs. They were true Serbs, no question of that.

Having found a base, we were able to make better preparations for our attacks, and we carried them out as far away as possible from the Serb settlements.

But we soon noticed uneasiness and hesitation among the local Serbs, who began to ask if we were not some of those who killed every Magyar they met and inflicted every sort of shame upon them. We had to hide our exploits from the Serbs. Then there began to be waverings among us. Why were we killing all the Magyars when, as we could see, they had not killed all the Serbs in Hungary? As soon as we started asking ourselves such questions, we stopped raping and killing indiscriminately and liquidated only the most notorious oppressors. The Serbs grew proud of us and regarded us as their avengers.

But we could not go on without losses. Even before our flight to Baja, the young man who had not wanted to take part in the raping died. A householder pierced his stomach with a pitchfork, and he himself begged us to finish him off so that he would not fall into the hands of the gendarmes. Others, too, were killed; we did not allow anyone who was wounded to be captured. At Baja our little band from time to time increased in size. Now and again some peasant would join us, either for profit or for revenge, and when the attack was over would return to his everyday tasks. But of those who had set out together only three remained by the summer of 1944—myself, Mitar, and his sister.

In the middle of the summer, when we least expected it, Mitar's sister was wounded. We had fallen into an ambush at night. We carried her, but the posse caught up to us in the morning; we could clearly hear the dogs and the shouts of the men. She implored Mitar: "Kill me, Brother. I would die sweetly by your hand!" I saw that the posse could catch us if we did not leave her—and we did not dare leave her alive for them to rape and mutilate. I could not say a word for sorrow, and my tears flowed; I had become as accustomed to her as to my own sister. Mitar, too, wept, but she did not shed a tear, only went on imploring. At last Mitar turned his rifle on her, and she caught hold of the barrel and put it to her heart. "There, there, Brother!" Mitar pulled the trigger, and she cried out and jerked away from the barrel. Our poor comrade had found peace. So was she killed, and we never ceased mourning for her.

Shortly afterward Mitar, too, was wounded. There were about fifteen of us in the band when someone betrayed us and we came upon the gendarmes in the midst of the forest. But the forest saved us; we slipped away and dispersed among the trees and in the marshes. Wounded, Mitar wanted to kill himself, but I would not let him. I carried him on my back. I cared for him and healed him. I was afraid his wound would become infected, but I saw with my own eyes that marsh mud cleanses a wound.

That autumn the Soviet Army broke into Hungary, and by winter had totally conquered it. I began to hope that I would enjoy to the full the misfortune of the Magyars.

We knew that in our country everything was topsyturvy, that the Communists had raised an insur-

rection, created an army, and introduced their sort of order. We had even come into contact with their partisans. But we did not want to join the Communists, for they were unbelievers, and what was worse, they did not kill all Magyars, only the policemen and the fascists, whereas to a Serb all Magyars are the same, and he will be happiest when not one of them is left. We were used to our own way of fighting and to associating with soldiers of our own faith, and we had set up a network of supporters.

It did seem to us that we ought to be able to get along with the Russian Army, even though it, too, was Communist. The men were Slavs and loved us Serbs; so it was and so it will remain, with Communism or without it. We would never have been crossing ourselves with three fingers, nor would our state and our name have been preserved, had it not been for the Russians. Not all are like this—they, too, have their politicians, their Communists, and their commissars—but the true Russian, he who for ages past has not changed, nor will ever be able to change, he is a Slav. He knows that he cannot exist if he does not suppress other tribes, and he is ready, when necessary, to exterminate them.

In their army, as in every other army, there were all sorts of men. No wonder! All those who do not begrudge their lives are welcome in war; and so their army had convicts and every kind of riffraff who liked to plunder, rape, and kill. Of them I do not speak; there are such in all armies, and everywhere they are an evil against which all men must fight. Nor do I speak of those whom the horrors of war had turned into beasts. It is no joke to cross thousands of miles of blood and fire and desolation in one's own innocent land, and be mild and understanding when one reaches the land and the homes of those who did it. But such men, embittered and crazy, are quickly satiated with doing evil to their enemy. They kill or rape one or two, and then something happens inside them, and later they grieve and are sorry.

I speak for those others, such as I was myself—those who exterminate their enemies not for profit or from bitterness, nor those who are of criminal or perverse disposition, but those who, like me, would not tread on an ant, much less consider doing evil to a man. I do not know how to express it accurately, but I am thinking of those who do such things because they know, or not so much know as believe, with their whole soul and every artery of their body, that they cannot do otherwise—that this is the way they must act if they themselves are to survive, not so much themselves as individuals, but their people.

At first the Russian command behaved as if the reins had slipped through their fingers, and they allowed the bloodstained soldiers to wreak their will. But soon they restored discipline and began to punish oppression and looting; they shot those who disobeyed, regardless of rank or ser-

vice, as only men can who receive orders and carry them out unquestioningly. Yet who can supervise, day and night, every soldier in so great an army, who can know every ear and every grain on every ear? Men of similar type, men of similar inclinations, find each other out, just as dogs smell each other out. So we rapidly and easily found Serbs and Russians who agreed that the Magyars should be exterminated.

None of us, not even I, knew any Russian. Nonetheless we served as interpreters for those Russians. We knew Hungarian, and Serbs and Russians, although their languages are not much alike, understand each other; a lot of words are the same, while others are similar and some are quite different, but even the latter can be understood when a man has the will to understand. So we led such Russians to do as we had been doing in Baja. The Russians did everything well, except that they did not kill willingly. This we Serbs carried out. For the Magyars were on our own doorsteps and in our homes, while Russia was far away. Nonetheless, the Russians wanted to display their power over the Magyars and drive them into the black earth, so that it would not enter the minds of even their grandchildren's grandchildren to lead Hungarian armies onto Russian lands.

I realized that it was important even for these Russians to find some justification, some pretext, for their command and for their own conscience. We tried to persuade them to go on killing and raping, but they hesitated: "It's not right. The Magyars, too, are people." And we: "Yes, the Magyars are people, but we are calling on you to eliminate fascists." "Oh, well, fascists—that's different," and they at once agreed.

Such pretexts were not needed for me and my band. Why? Fascist or Communist—to me the important thing was that they were Magyars. There was no sort of command over me and nothing weighed on my conscience, which told me: "Exterminate the Magyars, so that they do not exterminate you and all the Serbs."

Unfortunately, this period did not last long. The Russian command shortened the reins, the war ended, and we then had to carry out our task secretly and finally to disband and run away, we to our own land and our Russian friends to theirs.

But I, too, felt some qualms, after listening to those Russians trying always to find some pretext or excuse for what they were planning against the Magyars. I, too, began to turn things over in my mind and look for pretexts, though rather different ones. More and more often I forced myself to recall the evil and oppression that the Magyars had wrought on us Serbs—in my own village. I recalled the smallest details—and those the most gruesome—and gladly listened to and remembered every crime and oppression that they had wrought in other villages. I began to speak to myself and to my comrades: "Since they could, and since they began first, then so can we, and they had better look out for themselves."

I knew then, and I know now, that I was lying to myself and others, that these were only excuses, and that, in fact, I would have gone on exterminating the Magyars even if they had not done anything in my village or anywhere else. Right up to the beginning of the war I had not suspected that anything of the sort slumbered within me. The war stirred it up, aroused it, and in such a way that I could not root it out. No seed will begin to sprout if the sun does not shine; so in me it would not have sprouted had there been no war. But it had existed within me, although unsuspected. What happened in our village had only brought into my mind what it was my duty to do.

I know now that there are men who cannot understand, still less approve, what I did. I know that there were and are many Serbs who would not have done what I did. I am a religious man, and I know what our faith commands: Do not kill! But my conscience did not reproach me. Would I have been able to go on living if it had reproached me?

Now I recall that it seemed to me, when I was doing those things, as if it were not I but someone else. There was someone or something within me that gave me clear orders—"Do this or that"—and I did it. As if not I did it, that man whom you know and see, that man whom I myself knew and saw, but someone outside me—some power, neither evil nor good, which I could not resist. They were my hands that held the knife, and the warm blood spouted out over my hands; yet it was not I, not my consciousness, not my mind. Often I said to myself: "What you are doing is a sin and a crime." It was as if I were not speaking to myself, but to someone else, perhaps to him who had given me the command. If there was sin, it was his sin and not mine. It so happens that these horrors torment me and that I recall horrible pictures when I am alone, and therefore I do not like to be alone. But it is the horrors that are unpleasant to me, not my conscience!

I have forced myself to forget many of those horrors—those I committed myself. But one of my deeds I remember today as if it had just happened. We believed that we had killed a whole family, and then in the stables we found a small boy. He was about eight or nine years old, with big black eyes. Everything was mirrored in those eyes, and he looked wisely out of them as from the depths of his soul. Mitar struck him on the temple with his knife, but the blade did not enter. The child's face twisted, tears and blood mingled. He clung to my arm. "Don't let him, Uncle," he whimpered to me, and to Mitar: "Don't, Uncle. It hurts!" I felt sorry for the child, but I was ashamed in my own eyes and before my comrades that I felt pity for any Magyar. There was no way out, so with the hand he was clutching I pulled his head back and with the other cut his

throat. I cannot forget that boy and what happened to him. He comes out to me at night from the prison walls, wriggles through the bars, and entreats me in my dreams. I cannot even pray to God, though he might answer my prayers! But I do not regret even that—such deeds cannot be carried out without horror. I was angry with Mitar, though, for striking the boy so clumsily that I had to commit such a crime.

In the end war became insupportable to me, though not because of what I had done, since I had had to do it. I would have consented to do the same all my life and would never have tired of it. But a man wants his home and his village and a quiet life.

In 1946 Mitar and I came back to the Bačka, to our own land. We had sworn to kill our neighbor Janos if we came across him. But Mitar began to waver, as if Janos had not been a Magyar and was not now, in peacetime, still a Magyar. Mitar devoted himself entirely to his land and his family. I did not, even though at Baja I had left a wife and two small children by that wife, a Serbian girl I had lived with while I was raiding from there. I said to myself: "Enough of the Magyars. Now it is peace for them and for you. Get your house and land in order so that your wife and children may come." But in vain; the war between me and Janos was not over and I could not apply myself to any kind of work.

I killed Janos and hid his corpse. The authorities had got wind of what Mitar and I did in Hungary, but they had not touched us. It had happened in wartime and in a foreign land, and not even the devil himself would bring it into the open. They did not know anything about the killing of Janos. If anyone suspected that one of us had killed him, there was no proof, and no one touched us. My wife and children came, and I began to work industriously and to live a peaceful life. Two years passed and Janos' death still remained a mystery.

The workers' cooperatives began to be formed, and on that Mitar and I differed. He entered a cooperative and supported the authorities, and I was against them. I had told Mitar about the murder, never expecting he would inform on me because of a Magyar! Yet it was he who denounced me to the authorities. Time and circumstances had brought us into conflict. They sentenced me to twenty years.

Ten years I have already served. Ten more remain, unless there is an amnesty. Life, all that a man has from life, has passed me by. I am now an old man, decrepit and ill. Mitar, too, is old.

I am afraid that one or the other of us will die before I get out of prison. I must kill Mitar. I never thought that I would shed Serbian blood, but his I must. It seems to me that he is a Serb, and yet he is not; or if he was, he is one no longer. I must get even with him to be at peace. I have no other sorrows or desires in my life. □

—Translated by Lovett F. Edwards



THE GHOSTS OF NUREMBERG

by Philipp Fehl

The shapelessness of evil is many-faceted, and has its own dimensions which swell and shift and elude us as we try to take its measure.

In 1938, at the time when Jews hoping to leave Vienna had to stand in endless queues to acquire all sorts of permits that were never intended to be more than entrance tickets to still other queues for permits and eventually the crucial permit to emigrate (a process all too rarely completed successfully), there was one particular queue which went up a circular staircase in the office building of the Vienna Jewish Community. At the top, next in line to be admitted to the office, stood a young student named Meier Selzer, a rabbi in the habit of a Polish Jew, smiling ever so patiently and slightly swaying back and forth as he said his prayers. The door of the office was guarded by a burly policeman who watched with disdain. He evidently felt people were pressing too close to him for comfort, and so he grabbed the young man by the chest, pushed the queue back, and threw him down the stairwell. The victim fell and died without a sound.

I present only this one instance of the immensity of the guilt which the Nuremberg trials were called together to avenge, a death that lost its uniqueness because there were so many of the kind, and so many more spectacular ones, that it could never have been dealt with or mentioned at Nuremberg. Yet this death itself would have been cause enough to indict,

together with the particular murderer, a whole government, which by its avowed and public policy marked the victim and his fellows as persons—or nonpersons—who were to be shunned and hated by the populace; a populace which, though it had been usually found good-natured, responded with a certain readiness to the invitation to hate, or perhaps more often with a simple denial of the very existence of the people singled out as victims. There was a sense of “national awakening” going through the country, which, in the name of honor, perverted the standards of honor, and gave form to all sorts of brutal tendencies previously held under control.

I came to be at the Nuremberg trials quite by chance. During the war I served for a rather long time in the military police, as an interpreter in a camp for German prisoners of war and after that in a so-called re-education center for prisoners who were about to be released. When my wife and I traveled home to Chicago after my discharge from the Army, we stopped in Washington, and among other things, visited the Pentagon. Before we left we both had jobs at Nuremberg, as the result of a chance encounter with a former colonel under whom I had once served.

I was appointed as an interrogator, even though I had no legal training. As it turned out, that did not really matter. It was becoming more and more evident at the various interrogations conducted by scores of lawyers, most of whom did not know German, that the prisoners usually knew English well enough to benefit from the time needed to translate each question, thus coming up with an answer too

well prepared to be of much use to the questioning lawyer. The new interrogators were to be briefed by the trial lawyers, then would plan and conduct their own interrogations and eventually in their turn brief the lawyers. It was our job to prepare the so-called subsequent proceedings, that is, the trials of the minor war criminals; for example, the doctors and officials responsible for the painful and fatal experiments on prisoners in concentration camps and for the planning and handling of euthanasia, judges in the people's courts, members of the foreign office, industrialists who benefited from slave labor or produced poison gas for the mass murder of prisoners, military commanders in charge of murder, and so on.

As it turned out, a good many of these cases never came to trial, or not in the form or with the significance which had been intended. But at the time of my arrival the subsequent proceedings were being prepared most energetically, and the testimony of the major war criminals who were still being tried was needed as an important possible source of evidence against their former subordinates. One knew, of course, that the majority of these were certain candidates for the death sentence. Their testimony had to be secured before their execution. It was because of this singular need that I found myself, quite to my bewilderment, in almost daily contact with people who had been in positions of high and sometimes of the highest responsibility in Hitler's government of Germany. My wife, a research analyst, was part of a team that reviewed the endless official files and documents which the Germans had religiously preserved to the end of the war and which now were available to provide evidence against an equally endless number of people hopelessly implicated in the atrocities that had become routine in the management of German affairs.

Before we left America for Nuremberg my father-in-law, who was a legal scholar, urged us very earnestly not to go. He hated the war criminals with a perfectly appropriate passion, but he did not think that the trials as they were set up could fairly serve the cause of justice—and he did not want us to become involved in what he thought was the perpetration of fraud in order to avenge the most hideous crimes. His principal argument—that one cannot try anyone according to laws which were made after the fact—is old, but it was not applied to these trials because criteria of guilt had been selected—the points or “counts” of the indictment into which all evidence had to be squeezed—which were believed to be of such universal validity that the *ex post facto* consideration was not relevant. He also brought up the other obvious shortcomings of the proceedings: that the tribunal was one of victors trying the defeated, that it arrogated to itself powers to speak for parties who were not represented among the accusers or judges, that the actions of the victors before and even during the war—their toleration, if not encouragement, of Nazi Germany, and the eventual emula-

tion of some of the most dreadfully effective forms of wreaking destruction—should have been open to public review as much as was Nazi policy. He also predicted that national interests of the states engaged in the prosecution of the Nazi war criminals would interfere with the proper pursuit of justice at the trials. He did not think that it would have been wrong to single out Germans who had been in certain positions of leadership which made them immediately and obviously responsible for either ordering or tolerating so much bloodshed and to have them shot summarily. That was the right of a victor to whom the enemy had surrendered and to whose mercy he was not entitled, although he might hope for it. But the law was above victory and must not be tampered with by the state. That in itself was a kind of war crime.

We were impressed with my father-in-law's arguments but decided to go abroad against his advice partly because we were already committed and partly because we felt that it was more important—the opportunity having come to us unsought—to learn as much as we could about what had happened in Germany to bring out all this horror, and what the people who had invented it and ordered it and taken the credit for it could be like, and what they could say in their defense. We stayed for a year, from 1946 to 1947, and then we practically fled because we realized that we were becoming a part of a machine which more and more was working routinely, registering deeds of horror in terms of its own inane momentum only.

Nuremberg was a city almost totally dead. There was destruction everywhere. Walking into the old city was like walking into a painting by Dali. Sometimes the facade of a house would sink into itself in front of us, with a faint sound like a sigh—a footstep, the rolling of a stone would have released this dissolution of an often touchingly beautiful form into a heap of rubble. There was a sickly smell in the air everywhere. Once, when we were trying to look at what remained of the church of St. Lawrence, an ancient grave opened up beneath my wife and very nearly buried her. The church still had a bell, but no roof. Someone rang the bell as we were walking by, and dozens, perhaps hundreds, of ravens suddenly rose into the air, joining their ghostlike cries to the sound of the solitary bell.

Here and there on the facade of a house that was gone we found one of the markers put there for the benefit of sightseers, particularly participants in the monstrous party rallies, pointing out that the building was historically very valuable. There were only two buildings that seemed to be standing solidly—the Grand Hotel, where a large number of the staff of the trials were housed, and the Courthouse, a vast pseudo-Romanesque pile of the nineteenth century. During the Nazi era the Grand Hotel had been

called Hotel Reichsparteitag and had housed Nazi bigwigs when they had come for their annual festivities, which probably was why Nuremberg was selected—by way of a sort of counterdemonstration *post festum*—as the place in which to hold the trials. The Grand Hotel had hardly had time to change from one kind of occupancy to another. It too had been bombed and was being renovated quite efficiently. But in the process it was not always easy to pay attention to minor details, and it was not too surprising to the registration clerk that on the evening of our arrival he had given us the key to a room that was not there. I almost stepped into it, but fortunately the unexpected panorama of the evening sky above the specter city warned my wife to hold me back. Nor should we have considered it as anything but a favor that the room we were then given was luxuriously covered from wall to wall with a thick carpet in a pattern made up entirely of little swastikas. The cutlery in the dining room, engraved with the words Hotel Reichsparteitag, also sported the swastika supporting the eagle on the handles. At the beginning of our stay we found it hard to eat with such tools but soon found that these were the only serviceable ones in the place, and we got used to them, though not gladly. I never felt easy about getting my hair cut in the hotel's barbershop—the genial barber had probably bandied the same jokes more comfortably with persons I would be seeing in court or at my interrogations.

There was a steady coming and going—particularly of VIP's—in the Grand Hotel, and unbecomingly heavy-handed attempts were made to keep them amused. There were three bars (for men, for women, and for men and women), and entertainers were flown in regularly from Paris and other places. The house was secured like a fortress, with military police at the entrance. Outside, children and cripples would stand and wait, often several rows deep, to pounce on cigarette butts that the privileged would throw away before entering through the revolving doors into a different world. Cigarettes, of course, were the real currency, the gold coins, as it were, of the Germany of the time.

A silent presence of the dead victims of the Nazis, the memory of the persecuted, the victims of the air raids, the fallen soldiers on both sides, the impropriety of separating death from death, suffering from suffering, the distinction between the need to remember and the need to forget, the blood of so many that had cried out to God, deaths that wanted to be avenged and deaths that one could not even pity—all that hung over Nuremberg and stifled life. The air of boorish and idle sensuality which marks every garrison town in occupied territories seemed more oppressive at Nuremberg, and a dedication to methodical drunkenness was more noticeable. The presence of some alcoholics among us even bestowed a sort of pathos on the hopeless attempts to gather people together cheerfully. And death by suicide oc-

curred more frequently in Nuremberg than in other garrison towns, which all, of course, have a high suicide rate.

The Courthouse was some distance away from the Grand Hotel and best reached by car, although the many holes in the streets made for a bumpy ride. The Courthouse was always alive with a steady stream of people coming and going, German service people and a large number of secretaries, members of the armed forces of the nations participating in the trials, guards, sightseers from all over the world there to look on at the trials, and Germans who had passes to see the trials (there was always an effort afoot to prove to them that the trials were "fair"), the press, and so on. We knew a lieutenant in charge of some aspect of security who replaced his own photograph on his identity card with that of his dog and had no difficulty moving into and out of the Courthouse unchallenged for weeks, until he tired of the game. All this may serve not only as a background but as an explanation of the laxity or fecklessness that allowed Göring to get the poison with which he committed suicide shortly before his scheduled execution.

The great courtroom was, of course, the focal point of activity. It had been fixed up after the bombing to a point of technical (and aesthetic) perfection. The furniture, made of a blondish wood in a rather angular elegance, curiously contrasted with the moody remains of the pseudo-baroque and fortresslike shell of the old courtroom. It was as if the furniture of a French luxury liner of the thirties, say the *Normandie*, had been used quickly to prepare a warehouse on Dracula's estate for the visit of the Queen of England. There was a stage with elevated rows of seats, the prisoners' docks on one side, and facing them, at the other end of the courtroom, the judges' table. In the rear, facing the auditorium and encased in glass, sat the constantly busy and really very admirable interpreters, with earphones on their heads and talking into microphones. Movies were being taken all the time. The defense counsel, all German lawyers, some of them extremely capable and always accorded an almost Byzantine courtesy in court, practically sat at the feet of the people they defended. They, in turn, were faced by court stenographers, and in what might be called the pit of the stage sat the members of the prosecution staff, a chief counsel for each of the four nations engaged in trying the criminals, and behind him a sprinkling of staff standing by with books and documents, ready to give advice or to be sent out on errands. The rest, elevated above the scene, was an auditorium of rising seats.

On the whole it was like a movie theater. In fact, there were screens on the wall to allow movies to be introduced in evidence. Witnesses sat facing the auditorium in front of the glass wall which separated the court interpreters from the courtroom. If one really wanted to hear what was going on, one listened through earphones to the proceedings which were translated with near simultaneity into four lan-

The Ghosts of Nuremberg

guages. The sound of the human voice, the fall of steps, all noises were absorbed and reduced to a minimum by the heavy carpeting which covered every inch of ground. The scene came to life only in the dematerialized speech transmitted through the ear-phones. If you took them off you were in a world of ghosts without a purpose, one man speaking without sound, often addressing someone he did not look at, everyone else seemingly waiting, and then the roles were exchanged. It was as if the speakers were playing "musical chairs" to secret rules without the sound of music.

There were eight judges on the stage, one judge and a substitute for each of the four nations. Presiding was Sir Geoffrey Lawrence, who conducted the trial with a painstaking sense of fairness: an elderly English gentleman, very soft-spoken, and infinitely precise about the definition of each term. He frequently stopped proceedings in the kindest, most patient, and yet sovereignly insistent way to have translations clarified. There was the charter of the trials, and it was to be complied with absolutely, no matter how long it took. What went beyond it might be a whole world of relevance, but that, and quite properly so, should not be allowed to infect the trials. They were, under his leadership, a clinically perfect operation. If certain essential things could not be dealt with, that was the fault of the charter, and perhaps also of the essential things themselves which simply escaped the competence of courtroom proceedings.

Among the other judges the former U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle stood out most conspicuously as a man. He spoke rarely, always gently, and with a certain hesitancy, as if he could not quite believe that the trial was taking place, awed by the presence of victims as witnesses, and always to the point. Every remark I heard him make had something encouraging in it for the person he was addressing. It was a matter of finding the right word—not defining it, as Sir Geoffrey Lawrence did. His kindness in this respect was the same to prisoners or to witnesses, but there was also an infinite sense of sympathy with the victims combined with a shyness in every word he spoke to them or said for their cause, in his gestures, in his very glance even. His presence in the courtroom lent grace to the proceedings. I was not the only one who took comfort and even a certain pride in his being there. He alone made up the balance between the dark, pathetic despair on the one side of the courtroom and the light of humanity we so much longed to see on the other.

I can say little about the French or the Russian judges. The latter hardly ever spoke. They wore military dress, one of them a pince-nez, and acted, I trust, correctly, as members of a Russian court-martial would. Their behavior was thoroughly strict, machinelike.

The star of the prosecution was undoubtedly Sir Hartley Shawcross, a brilliant lawyer (later Attorney General of Britain), elegant in his reasoning power, gifted with a splendid memory. He turned his interrogations into cunningly understated shows as he prepared traps for the people he questioned. He was polite, with a drawing-room coolness to friend and foe, but sardonic to the latter when he had caught him. It was almost a game that he staged in which the person he interrogated became a dancing partner in a performance of which only he knew the rules. Göring, who enjoyed, with a sardonic humor of his own, rising to challenges, once got the better of him, and Sir Hartley never forgave him.

The American chief prosecutor, Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, was responsible for much of the tenor of the prosecution. It was inevitably the accent on the word *murder* that he wanted to stress, and he did so in the language and with the gestures suited to a certain type of American courtroom, where the prosecuting attorney is trying to impress the jury that the prisoner is vile, a liar, beats his wife, and is therefore likely to commit murder also. I once saw Justice Jackson go through a rather unworthy diatribe—unworthy because of the obviousness of the facts of the crime—holding on to a suspender strap in the manner of courthouse lawyers I know only from movies and pointing his right hand demanding at the accused as if to say, "Now, confess!" It was again Göring who gave him a rather curt and ingeniously rude answer. Mr. Jackson had got his facts mixed up.

Ernst Kaltenbrunner, one of the leaders of the storm troopers and a most efficiently ruthless man, justly charged with the most hideous crimes—it was his business to see that murders were carried out effectively—once muttered darkly to himself in the course of an interrogation that the trials were not proper trials; they were gangster trials, nothing else. He repeated the words *gangster trials* and shook his head with a gesture of denial. To him it was not worth the effort, so near his death, to respond to such a court. The court was unworthy of his crimes. Kaltenbrunner himself was a lawyer by training; he knew what he was talking about. I think that he, as well as most of the others, would have spoken if he had been tried or talked to in his capacity as statesman—murderous statesman, intent on doing his best, however much that was the worst in our eyes. We would then have had some sort of confrontation, a concern, in the end, for ideas, for thoughts and their consequences. It would have been a trial our court never would have been qualified to undertake—but under Justice Jackson's direction the proceedings took an unnecessary turn toward belittling the war crimes altogether, as if the men who perpetrated them had wanted to rob a bank. Better police protection will keep the world safer for democracy in the future. But of course the criminals were political people—idealists, in fact—who in their bright moments were marching forward happily, dagger in hand, leading their compatriots toward what

they thought was a cleaner, a better, a healthier future, a future corrected for mankind. Ruthlessness was not advocated as an end in itself by them, but as a necessary obligation imposed upon them by a ruthless enemy and by the law of nature. The argument, as we know, did not die just because people like Kaltenbrunner were sent to their deaths. They were indeed murderous and murderers, but it might have helped, and it would have been a more just trial, if Justice Jackson could have comprehended that there are, as it were, honest motives for mass murder which transcend the only motive he seemed to be able to hold on to, the desire for personal gain.

The Russian prosecutor, Mr. Rudenko, put his emphasis on murder and on the criminal contemptibility of the murderers in a similar manner, but instead of seeing the accused as gangsters, he called them fascists, hirelings of the capitalists, servile little men, insects who had put themselves in the possession of a state. His oratory was altogether baroque and consisted chiefly in vilifications of the prisoners—he did not exactly abuse them in person, but addressed himself to abstractions. His manner did not correspond to the choice of his words; he looked and acted rather like a macabre bookkeeper and read his papers in a fairly dispassionate and soothing voice. I could rarely bear to listen for any length of time to the translation of what he was saying because the content was so absurd, abstract, and repetitious; but I enjoyed the sound of the Russian.

I did not attend the sessions in the courtroom very often because I was busy with my own interrogations. But I was there one day when a movie was shown of the trial of the German generals who had been unsuccessful in their attempt on Hitler's life. The movie had been made for Hitler's benefit and was now introduced in evidence. I remember most vividly one touching scene when Freisler, the judge in charge—himself a war criminal, already dead, who had, as an engineer in the legalization of murder, cooperated with Hitler in the plans for "the final solution" of the Jewish problem—was screaming at the top of his voice, in a fit of fury and righteous indignation, at a general who was standing very quietly before him in a soldierly and yet curiously absentminded pose. The general was small of stature, and he looked dazed, like a nearsighted man whose glasses have been taken away. (He may have been blinded by the camera lights, and he may, before his appearance in court, have undergone much physical suffering.) "How could you, a German officer, be so oblivious of your military dignity as to plot an assassination of your supreme commander?" shouted Freisler. It was a rhetorical question, but there was a pause. One could see the general reflect. And then, in a very mild voice, a little surprised, as if he had suddenly remembered, came the answer: "It was because of the many murders I saw." He wanted to go

on, but Freisler cut him off, pounded the table, and screamed in a paroxysm of rage: "Murder? How dare you call it murder if you had the authority of the Führer . . . ?" The general was made to sit down. I do not remember what happened next in the movie or whether this was all that was shown, but there was a great silence in the courtroom. It was as if an angel had flown through the room, invisible, and yet touching everybody with his presence.

Meanwhile, proceedings went on in their humdrum way and things happened routinely in the course of the trials. I once walked into a room filled with office workers from various nations, typing away and dictating various reports for the use of the prosecuting attorneys. Directly behind me a German peddler came in, a well-dressed man of a somewhat lordly bearing—without it he could never have got past the military policemen, who were really quite young soldiers, children from faraway places dressed up as military men. This man was offering two cameras for barter against cigarettes. The whole room (there were perhaps twenty people) was immediately transformed into a bazaar: people examined the cameras, bargained, gave advice. It was a pause in the midst of horror that only added new horror to the record already before us: black marketeers harmlessly pursuing a career of convicting murderers.

After the execution of the major war criminals the international press corps, which was housed in a pseudo-castle, the requisitioned mansion of Eberhard Faber the pencil king, gave a colossal reception for all who cared to come. The excesses of drunkenness were extraordinary, with national beverages flown in from all over the world to do justice to the occasion. One incident of that evening stays in my mind. There was an unfortunate Czech colonel, a member of the Czech government, who tried as best he could to get prominent people from the Western side to speak with prominent Russians. The security of his country depended on the success of such an entente. All the people he approached were tipsy, as was he, and in a fit of good fellowship an Englishman raised his cup and began to sing, "Volga, Volga . . ." The Czech, a rather stout man wearing an eye patch, raced over to the Russians on the other side of the room and pointed to this British fellow. Not to be outdone, the Russians began to sing, guided by the Czech, "It's a long way to Tipperary . . ." Joined by the Englishman they climbed up onto the stage, the happy Czech in the center of the group, and sang national courtesy songs to each other, swaying to the music. The band struck up, and all joined in larmoyantly. So much for the national security of Czechoslovakia. I sometimes see the group of seemingly harmless careerists before me at night and wonder who sings with whom at the diplomatic receptions of these days.

From the corner of the window of my office we were able to look into the prison courtyard where the major war criminals were led at appointed hours for

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their exercise. They walked in a circle, gray and silent. I remember that Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the German governor of the Netherlands, walked with a limp. I saw them every day. I fully approved of their execution. How could they have merited to live? And yet I missed the sight of them when they were no longer there, as if some mistake had been made. Some of them had become familiar figures in my life, curiously courteous partners in interrogations which turned out to be conversations, exchanges of information instead of pitched battles in which one tries to take advantage of the other. We were, on both sides, I think, too fatigued and too oppressed by the memory of suffering and death to engage in such sports. Oddly, we understood each other. Each belonged to a different side of the looking glass, but we saw each other, even shared in a mutual sense of regret and hopelessness, however much our motivations were different.

I found that I neither hated nor feared these men. It had become clear to me very soon that I could not afford to hate them—that was too much familiarity, a proximity that tainted. But after a while I also found that they were just memories even then when they were still alive, too gray in the expectancy of their death to be persons. On the whole they gladly offered the information one asked. They had little interest in the continuing well-being of their subalterns (into whose careers we inquired for the preparation of the subsequent proceedings)—the war was lost, there was no point. They enjoyed the exercise of their memories, the ability to re-create situations, to contribute to the record of history, so that future historians would know exactly how this or that event had taken place, as if this would establish that they had not lived and toiled altogether in vain.

I used to make it a point, in preparing myself for my interrogations, to look at photographs of the person to be interrogated. There was an extensive collection available at Nuremberg, the Hoffmann archives, the collection of Hitler's personal photographer. To be photographed by Hoffmann must have been quite an honor in those days. I came upon these archives more or less by chance. The Courthouse was so large and so like a rabbit warren that few people knew of its resources. I was received with joy by a shriveled-up, officious elderly man of courtly gestures, half barber and half musical conductor, who helped me find the pictures I wanted. Inevitably the people I was to question looked monstrously splendid, self-satisfied, optimistic, at once devoted followers and commanding leaders, the imperious pose of the Hitler salute being at the same time a pledge of allegiance. When I met them in the interrogation room they were conciliatory, quiet, harmless, and often urbane civilians, as if they had dressed up in uniform and posed only to have their pictures taken.

After my third visit to the Hoffmann archives I discovered that my friendly guide was Herr Hoffmann himself. I was surprised that he was at liberty in the

Courthouse, but he had, after all, only been a photographer, even though Hitler's exclusive photographer, and the father-in-law of Baldur von Schirach (one of the accused who had been the leader of the Hitler Youth and the governor of Austria). It was also true that in the days before Hitler's greatness Hoffmann had been instrumental in advancing him in the polite society of Munich, and so he came close to being one of the nuclear members of the original Nazi Party. But that did not make him a war criminal. He was a curiously pleasant man who had known how to get on in the world, urbanely indifferent to the demands of self-respect. I think he simply had been first and foremost an enterprising photographer. Perhaps he would have photographed me also in an S.S. uniform, had I asked him to.

I once asked him about Hitler's art program, and he was quite proud. He had had his share in the formulation of an important part of it, the protection of the German home from kitsch. "You will not believe," he said to me, "how much the German home was threatened by national kitsch—the use of the swastika on flowerpots, for example, or a Hitler portrait on a chair cover, and things like that. But we stopped it all." He believed he had protected the dignity of German art by confining, say, portraits of Hitler to appropriately significant monumental efforts. When I saw him for the last time he was quite crestfallen. It turned out he would have to go back to prison, even though an American prosecuting attorney had promised him his freedom in exchange for some information he wanted as evidence against someone else, or perhaps, I forget which, in exchange for his photographic archives. Herr Hoffmann was not so upset about returning to prison as he was disappointed and amazed that an American lawyer should not have kept his word. For the first time, it seemed, Herr Hoffmann's faith in man was shaken.

Julius Streicher was the only one among the accused who did not care if you thought him a monster. He had been the Jew-baiter par excellence, a former schoolteacher, *Gauleiter* of Franconia, founding member of the Nazi Party, a thoroughly rabble-rousing orator, and the editor of the *Stürmer*, a newspaper dedicated entirely to arousing hatred of the Jews, no matter what the means. He stuck to this role even after the defeat of Germany, did not attempt to cooperate with the trials, but sat in the dock, his head bent low, with a boorish expression on his face, moving his mouth continually in a nervous, jaw-accentuating chewing motion. This man, with a certain admirable consistency not remotely reached by any other prisoner, refused in interrogations to speak a word in the presence of Jews. If the prosecution was to get information out of him they had to send a gentile. I consequently never saw him except in the courtroom. It was singular to see how none of the other prisoners, except perhaps

The Ghosts of Nuremberg

Hess, wanted to be identified with this man. He was almost ostracized as if he had been the black sheep of the movement—"if it had not been for Streicher we wouldn't have had the bad name we now have." His vulgarity was a reproach to his fellow defendants. They thought of this man whom in former days they had accepted as an intimate associate of Hitler's, as a mere plebeian, a member of a necessary but lower class of Nazi whose unmerited presence in the docks compromised them and misrepresented their former purposes.

Streicher's defense, incidentally, was ingenious and very brief: he had merely edited a newspaper and spoken his mind. There was nothing wrong in that, was there? He himself, he said, had never harmed anyone. His role was merely that of an educator. It was proven, however, that he had in fact been responsible for the deaths of some people. It would not surprise me if he really had forgotten about these minor incidents in his career.

Rudolf Hess I once saw close up when I was present at someone else's interrogation of him. He spoke fluently but without sense, the eyes were unsteady, and he gave the impression of being mad. He held himself in control, but only barely so, and was pleased with himself when he succeeded in responding when called upon.

The star of the accused—one cannot help using this word; he would himself have appreciated it—was undoubtedly Hermann Göring. He was tall, had at one time been quite fat in a handsome, shining way, but now had lost a great deal of weight and seemed to feel fitter for it though his skin was hanging in big pouches over his face. His eyes darted with a quick, readily amused intelligence. He would wait when asked a question, and then a whole barrage of answers would break loose. He was precise, sardonic, cooperative, like a very clever partner in a tennis match—appreciating the briskness of the game but also wanting to win. Once, after he had avoided answering a question in a fashion I could not have anticipated, he quite suddenly rattled off to me the names of a number of people who had been implicated in a monstrous action, names that I had unsuccessfully tried to get from him by beating about the bush—and he smiled a perfectly terrifying smile, a very wide, boyish grin, that also had death in it. Perhaps he produced that also in order to win.

An American psychiatrist who was at Nuremberg testing the war criminals made much ado over the fact that Göring had a very high I.Q. He could not get over the fact that an intelligent man might be a monster. Göring was certainly not a Nazi, more nearly a *condottiere*, or perhaps a Cesare Borgia as he appears in nineteenth-century German novels. He did not hate Jews; it was all a matter of indifference to him. He gave me regards (which I never delivered) to one of the Jewish owners of the New York Times. They had been friendly together, he said, in former times. It seemed to me that in a way he was glad the

war was over and lost. He had lived for experience. He had made his mark. The show had come to its end. An existentialist writer might be much intrigued by the accomplishments of this action-hero. His very suicide was a triumph, a grandstand act played to the gods.

The governor of Poland, Hans Frank, was another decidedly romantic figure. He lived on the border of madness, was a passionate and gifted speaker (he had been a lawyer) who would go into the interrogations in a grand style, using a vocabulary that combined enthusiasm with biblical prose, sometimes in the manner of William Blake and sometimes of Stefan George, denouncing the Nazis, wickedness, himself, and his former colleagues. He came equipped with names of people who had, under his direction—which he readily admitted—committed atrocities. "*Aus dem Grabe rufe ich es ihm zu . . .*" ("From my grave I shout it forth to him . . ."), he said of a former colleague, that he is responsible for the destruction of this and that city—and then came another name, and another—and all this as sincere as it was grandiloquent. There was much of the artist in him. He described in moving terms, but at the same time glorying in his art of description, and glorying in the memory of his having been there and able so to perceive the event, a monastery in the city of Cracow going up in flames while he stood on the ramparts of the fortress overlooking it. He must have used field glasses to be able to see better: "The wonderful monks in their white, bulging robes running into their burning church to save the relics and the building collapsing over them in a glory of flames . . ." is a fragment I can still hear him pronounce before me, the hand stretched out in a visionary gesture, the eyes half-closed, the voice overly loud but mellifluous, remembering. He was deploring the atrocities, and with a repentant heart, yet filled with vanity. He was able to contain it all only with the help of madness.

His private journals, when he was governor of Poland, were available at Nuremberg. In them he had used practically the same terms when he recorded, if I recall correctly, the same event, and certainly, other disasters of the war, like Nero fiddling when Rome was burning, and perhaps even mindful of the precedent—but he did not then think it was sorrowful. Nor did he delight in it. It was simply the record of a grand encounter with the sublime in the form of an all-consuming fire. We should perhaps here recall (even though it does not directly apply to Cracow, which was preserved to be turned into a "German" city) that the destruction of Polish cities was not merely the consequence of so-called "total war" but an aspect of a carefully worked out program for turning Poles into a nation of slaves and of depriving them, in preparation for this role, of the memory of their history.

General Alfred Jodl, by contrast, was all calm, in every respect a man in control of himself, extraor-

dinarily intelligent, a technician of war, neither a Nazi nor a non-Nazi, a general serving his nation, but much more a citizen of his army—its honor alone seemed to matter to him—than of his country. He wished to make the point that the German Army could have won the war if it had not been interfered with by Hitler's amateurish generalship. For all I know he was right, and we must be grateful that there was a Hitler to have interfered. He was charged with many atrocities, the shooting of hostages and other crimes of a military nature. He rejected the charges. If outrages were committed, he said, they were committed against orders and under his immediate command would have been punished severely, and wherever he knew of any, they were. The shooting of hostages in ever larger numbers, the destruction of cities, the use of prisoners as slave labor: these came along in the course of the war as the need for such measures became greater and greater. No nation when it fights for its survival, he said, can afford to act differently. And the only way to protect oneself against partisan activity, which is by nature illegal, is to take hostages.

I record this for what it is worth. It is an able and even a respectable defense, but I also want to hold it next to the account of the general who at his trial by the Nazis said that he came to plan Hitler's assassination because of the many murders he had seen.

Albert Speer has presented his case in his recent autobiography. He offered the same arguments at Nuremberg: he was a self-sufficient, nonpartisan technician who regretted what had happened. Yet he was in the first row of everything that went on. I do not think that he is lying now, nor was he lying then—he struck me as a man totally devoid of imagination, of the willingness to let himself be moved by anything. Like other functionalist architects he made a virtue of the rejection of the musing faculty of the mind. His understanding is therefore as limited as his memory is precise, and as his draftsmanship and the efficiency of his planning at the bidding of Hitler's imagination were precise. I remember, clearly, two things he communicated to me, as a kind of unsought confidence. He thought that Hitler's girlfriend, Eva Braun, was rather a simple person, Hitler only a petty bourgeois in his taste—not glorious enough a figure, it would seem, for the kind of stage Speer had built for him. He also let me know, I assume because it made him appear to be a cultured person, that since he had been sent to prison he had read all of Goethe's writings and was able to remember them very well. He had in mind the forty-volume edition.

The other prisoners I knew were less remarkable for their gifts or their self-control, and many either affected not to have known or more likely never had quite realized what they had been doing. Nothing succeeds like success. I asked Constantin von Neu-

rath, the onetime governor of Bohemia and Moravia, after he had told me, I think quite truthfully, that he had been of no consequence in the government that had gone under his name and that the S.S. had been doing all the managing, how it happened that he had also been a general of the S.S.? He was a genial man, past middle age, rosy-cheeked and fairly heavy, distinguished-looking in the manner of a diplomat, evidently a good raconteur. As I asked my question a light shone in his eyes; he somehow had found his former self in the midst of the degradation of the prison. He leaned forward and said: "Oh, let me tell you how this happened and you will see what things were really like then. You see, Hitler had asked me repeatedly to join the S.S. but I always found a way out. I did not think that a man of my position should be in the S.S." (and he hinted and assumed that I would of course agree, being also a gentleman, that it was for a man of his conservative, aristocratic associations a bit *déclassé* to hobnob with the nouveau élite). "But," he said, "one day, when I came to the castle in Prague, there was a tailor waiting for me. I asked, 'What do you want?', and the tailor said, 'I have been sent here by the Führer to take your measurements for an S.S. general's uniform. The Führer will meet the Duce at the Brenner, and he wants you to be present at the meeting.' "Well," said Von Neurath to me, "under the circumstances I could hardly do anything else—but believe me, sir," he added, "I have not worn this uniform again since that day on the Brenner."

I saw Von Ribbentrop once. The fear of death was upon him. I do not remember what he said, but I do remember a nervous gesture of his hand. He constantly kept rubbing it over his neck, as if to massage away the strangulation he anticipated. He was absentminded, detached from a consideration of good or bad—or history, or memory—by fear and by a desire not to betray that fear and to hold together as a man until he would not have to worry any longer.

I also remember a gesture of the airplane-builder Willy Messerschmidt during the course of an interrogation which was meant to help determine whether he should be put on trial. He was not in danger of his life even though he was suspected of having used slave labor ruthlessly in the war plants he managed. He said that he missed his violin, and he went through his hair with his hand, smoothing it with an affectionate and thoughtful gesture. "Never again," said he, "will I build airplanes. I shall do work which cannot be deflected from the peaceful use to which I always wanted to dedicate my efforts." And he said he had designed in prison a new kind of three-wheel automobile which would be safe in towns, cheap to run, and useless in war. I am sure he believed all that when he said it—but he was already making planes again before my wife and I left Germany.

Hans Fritzsche, a news commentator and broadcaster, stood accused with the elite of the war criminals instead of Joseph Goebbels (who had ended by

suicide) so that someone from the Ministry of Propaganda might be on hand for trial at the principal proceedings. He once spoke to me of the perfection of propaganda; "an invention," he said insinuatingly, "that was as important in modern warfare as rockets might be." Evidently he thought that this discovery might get him off his trial and shipped honorably to America, as was Wernher von Braun for his expertise with "hardware." But Fritzsche overestimated not only my gullibility but also my influence. Still, he may well have been correct in his assessment of the dangerous potential of the weapon he was praising. Characteristically enough for the shortcomings of the proceedings at Nuremberg, Fritzsche was acquitted. His defense—that he had been only a newscaster, that he was only broadcasting words and had never himself harmed anybody physically or given commands to that effect—had to be accepted. We were not trying ideas but murder with a weapon in the hand that could be traced to a body on the ground.

Fritz Sauckel, the man in charge of the use and care of the vast army of foreign laborers recruited or coerced to work for the Germans, was quite a simple man. He could not understand why people were so against him. It was not slave labor but laborers from many countries that he was managing and for whose well-being he had cared. "You can ask my wife," he said, with firm belief in his own goodness, "whether I did not go and spend every Christmas with my laborers in their camps even though that meant denying myself the Christmas feast with her and the children." And he added that he had been a socialist long before he had become a National Socialist and that this tie alone should demonstrate that he was a friend of the laboring man. He did not think he had changed very much by becoming a Nazi; in his capacity as a German he had merely found a more appropriate focus for his philanthropy. It was a point I heard made not infrequently by lesser Nazis in the attempt to comprehend their own actions. It was singularly grotesque, however, to see a man so deeply implicated in murder continuing to feel and speak like a trade unionist.

Judges in the people's courts who were responsible for many legal murders almost inevitably told me that they disapproved of the harsh laws they had to enforce and that they saw to it that everything was done in strict obedience to the letter of the law and no more. The implication was that they could have been much more severe than the law had they so chosen. It occurred to none of them that they could also have applied the law sloppily and thus managed to save a few hapless dissenters from Nazi tyranny. One such judge thought his implication in this horror was all due to fate. "If only I had not worked so hard in 1934," he said (and yet it was quite easy to see how proud he still was of having worked so hard), "I would not have been promoted at the time and would not now be in this mess." Many prisoners I talked to felt that I did not understand: that one

could not jump off a racing train, that Germany was full of hope after the sorrow of the shameful treaty of Versailles, that things were looking up under Hitler. "Who could have known," I always felt was the unspoken, sorrowful conclusion, "that he would ride us into war—and that he would lose it? That changed everything." Of course I also was not able to understand why anyone had to be a judge in a people's court if he did not want to be. Surely there were other, more honorable professions in Germany. But we did not discuss these matters. I could only look and wonder, as I still wonder today.

One day a German lady, dressed all in black, was ushered into my room. She understood, she said, that I was investigating the people's courts' decisions. Could I help her exonerate the memory of her husband? She clearly lived only for that purpose, and she wept as she spoke. Her husband, she said, had been denounced to the people's court for having listened to the foreign radio. He was arrested and within two days he was tried and executed. "But," she said imploringly, "please believe me, he never did listen to the foreign radio; he was a good citizen and was executed unjustly."

I sometimes wonder about the effect of what is probably the best and most responsible and yet, I believe, painfully inadequate and misleading discussion of the insufficiency of the conventional apparatus of justice to take the measure of Nazi criminality. I have in mind Hannah Arendt's book on the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. In her report she speaks of the *banality of evil*, a term which has for some time haunted our reflections on the relation between crime and punishment when murder transcends all measure and, having become a folkway, can no longer even be named by its name. I heartily regret the choice of this phrase and the ready acceptance it has been accorded in the literary society that cares about these things. The term indeed points out a certain aspect of the ugliness of guilt, but I believe it also confines our understanding of it to a mere surface level because it introduces standards of aesthetic and intellectual one-upmanship as guides on our attempted walk through the house of death. They are, I fear, not altogether unrelated to Speer's condescending astonishment that Hitler's mistress was a simple girl and not a great lady.

However small a man a murderer may be, however few the words he may be able to stammer on the Shakespearean stage of his guilt, the blood he shed absolves him from the petty reproach of banality. Guilt, far from degrading a man, elevates him to a capital responsibility. He ceases to be average, however much he may look it, and however pointless his conversation. The blood he shed stains him with an excellence he would gladly rub off but cannot. If the dimensions of the guilty acts become universal and their record necessarily becomes repetitious and

ceases to be interesting, the guilt itself can never be contemptible.

If a phrase must be found to counteract the hapless choice which has been made I should like to speak of the *shapelessness of evil* instead. It is a many-faceted shapelessness, and it has its own dimensions which swell and shift and elude us as we try to take its measure or even simply to name it. At Nuremberg I saw these facets glitter before my eyes and turn and become different or turn away but never extinguish themselves. No one, whether victor or vanquished, guilty or innocent, clever or simple, who was present at Nuremberg remained the same in the flickering light of this awesomeness. Everybody cast a strange shadow, and that of the criminals, contorted and bloody, ruled every one of their gestures. Most of them knew it and became themselves even more a part of that monstrous shadow when they tried to fight it and attempted to stand and look, after their defeat, as they had stood and looked before they entered, some precipitously and eagerly, some unwittingly in sloth, and some in the sloth they called duty, upon their collective course of murder.

People were severely tried when they were cast into situations that allowed only two alternatives, either to become monsters by acquiescing to whatever it was that was going on about them that brought harm and dishonor to an innocent man—and the best way to acquiesce is to look away so that one does not have to see what is going on before one's eyes or, worse yet, to trust authority frivolously and pretend to oneself that the innocent man is not innocent—or, the alternative, to take upon themselves desperate risks so that they might continue to remain human. We can only pray that we may not be so tested, and in these awful times we must prepare ourselves, should the awesome choice be imposed upon us, to react, even under duress, in the right way. It is not enough to trust in one's good intentions. Instead, training, by the recalling of example and by the praise of its accomplishment, is necessary. And we should remember that the right action which is demanded of us when the choice is upon us is rarely a melodramatic one. The circumstances in which we are tested are not likely to move us toward acts of heroism as we know them from the stage or from the slogans and passions exercised in our protest demonstrations, but instead, toward what is obvious in the terms of the small life. To hide a victim, to comfort

the afflicted when the law of the land is wicked, involves lying, pretense, taking advantage of situations—in short, involvement in forms of homely corruption in which the great majority of citizens are already engaged (but self-righteously and without risk to life and property) in their attempts to deny the presence of the test and to keep what they fancy is a clean conscience.

But do we always know what is right or wrong in situations where presumed experts have proved themselves so untrustworthy? Certainly not often, unless we will be guided by the experience of our every-day encounters with the griefs and sorrow of our fellowmen. If our imagination is attuned to compassion, the awareness of our responsibilities will not lag behind. Socrates once said he had a daimon who, when he was about to do something wrong, prevented him from doing it. But, of course, Socrates had the courage to listen to his daimon. For the rest of us, I think, such a force exercises itself in a certain shyness to cooperate with evil, which used to be called the fear of God. Whether we think we are atheists or not, we should attempt to reconquer the fullness of the meaning of this obsolete term. Perhaps, if we read it slowly, we can learn again to derive comfort and guidance from a passage in Exodus (Chapter I, Verses 15 to 22) which provides and praises the example of two simple Israelite women who, in a desperate situation, were not altogether heroines but whose actions were pleasing in the eyes of God and determined the course of history for the better:

And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: and he said, When you do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the birthstool: if it be a son, then you shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive. And the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said unto them, Why have you done this thing and have saved the men children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women: for they are lively, and are delivered even before the midwife comes to them. And God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses. □

FOUR POEMS

by Nicanor Parra

Translated by Miller Williams

I FULFILL MY PATRIOTIC DUTY

by looking at what I spit out
the chances are it's a tadpole
one time I spat out a gothic cathedral
two North American aircraft carriers
three buses assembled in Chile
four steam locomotives
five nineteenth-century aerostatic balloons
six caskets and their respective cadavers
seven dragons vomiting fire
eight or nine hearses
and a whole hell of a lot of rotten tomatoes

INFLATION

Bread goes up so bread goes up again
Rents go up
This brings an instant doubling of all taxes
The cost of clothes goes up
So the cost of clothes goes up again.
Inexorably
we follow a vicious circle.
In jail there is food.
Not much, but there is food.
Outside of jail are only great stretches of freedom.

THE RULE OF THREE

Not counting
The twenty million missing
How much do you think the deification of Stalin
Came to in cold, hard cash:

Monuments cost money.

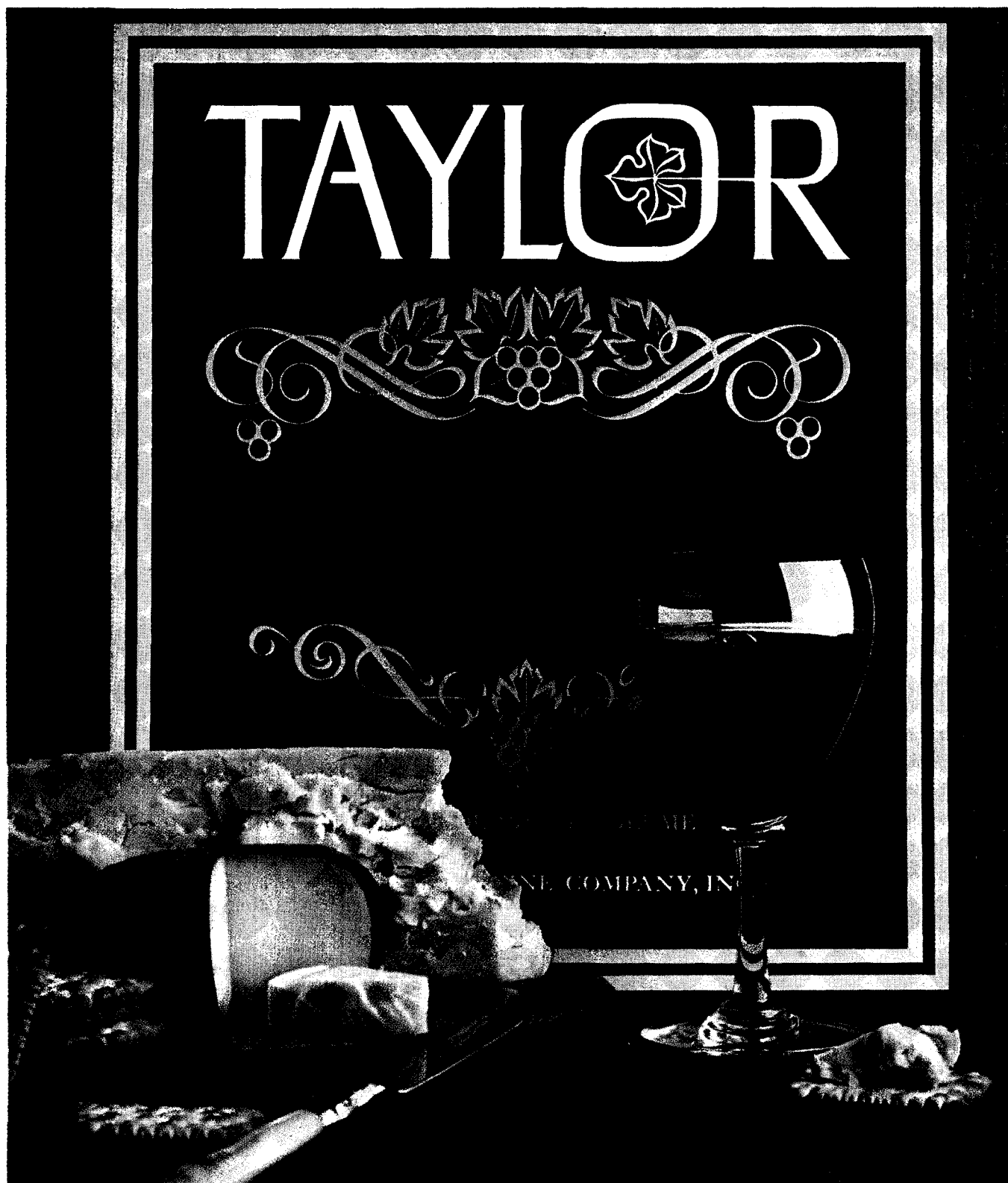
What do you think it cost
To pull down the concrete?

Simply moving the body
Out of the mausoleum to the common grave
Had to cost a fortune.

And what do you think we'll spend
Putting the sacred statues back in place?

SEVEN

the basic themes of lyric poetry are seven
the first one is the pubis of a maiden
then the full moon the pubis of the sky
a small stand of trees bowed down with birds
a sunset like a picture postcard
the musical instrument they call a violin
and the absolute marvel of a bunch of grapes.



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FRIDAY NIGHT IN THE COLISEUM

by William C. Martin

For every wrestler who enters the ring with pure heart and clean hands, a dozen Foreigners and so-called Intellectuals and Sonsofbitches seek to bring him down with treachery and brute force and outright meanness.

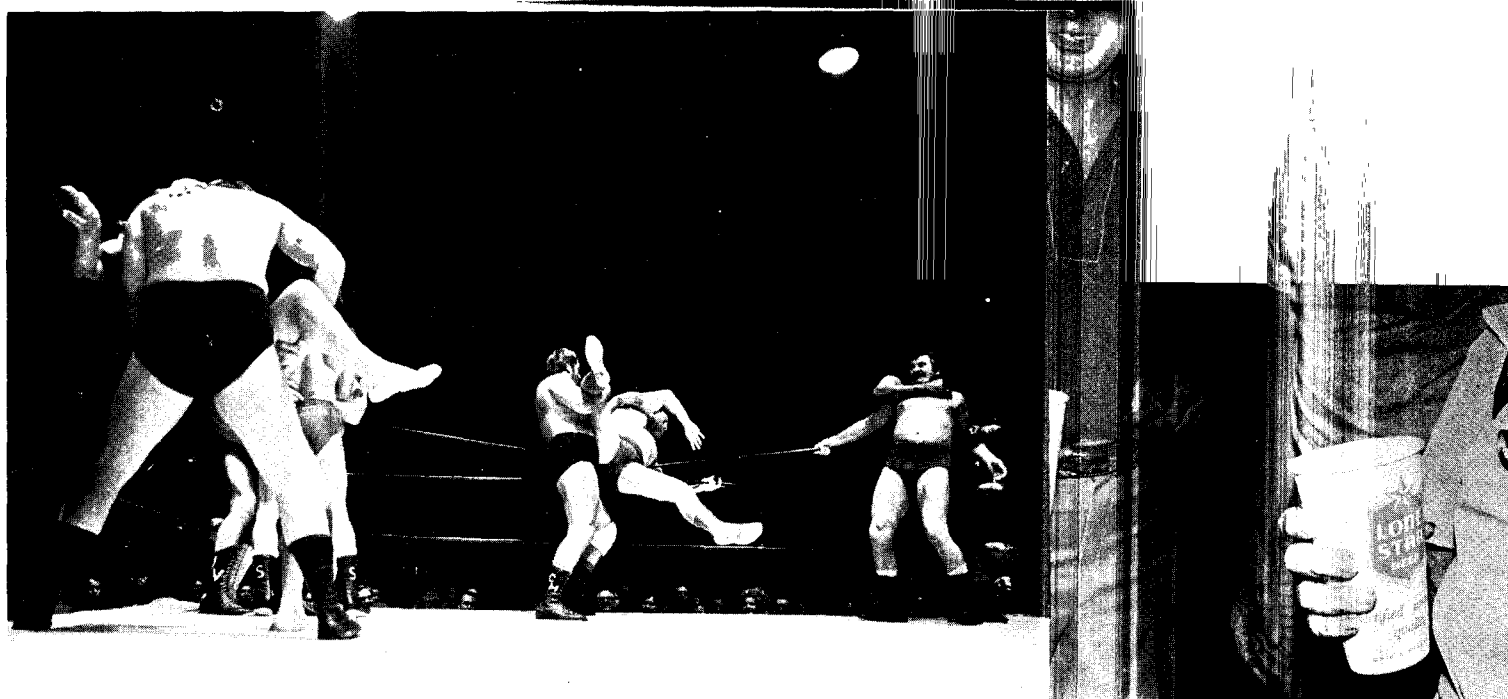
“When I die, I want to be cremated, and I want my ashes scattered in the Coliseum on Friday night. It’s in my will.” Thus spoke a little old lady who hasn’t missed a Friday night wrestling match for—well, she’s not exactly sure, but “it’s been a long time, son, a long time.” On Friday night, fifty times a year, more than 6500 fans stream into the Coliseum in downtown Houston for promoter Paul Boesch’s weekly offering of Crushers, Killers, Bruisers, and Butchers, Commies, Nazis, Japs, and A-rabs, Dukes, Lords, and Barons, Professors and Doctors, Cowboys and Indians, Spoilers and Sissies, Farmers and Lumberjacks, Bulls and Mad Dogs, Masked Men and Midgets, Nice Girls and Bitches, and at least one Clean-cut, Finely Muscled Young Man who never fights dirty until provoked beyond reason and who represents the Last, Best, Black, Brown, Red, or White Hope for Truth, Justice, and the American Way.

Though scoffed at by much of the public as a kind of gladiatorial theater in which showmanship counts for more than genuine athletic skill, professional wrestling enjoys steadily increasing success not only in Houston but in hundreds of tank towns and major

cities all over America. This is not, of course, the first time around. Pro wrestling has been part of the American scene for more than a century and has enjoyed several periods of wide popularity. For most fans over thirty, however, it began sometime around 1949, with the arrival of television. Lou Thesz was world champion in those days, but the man who symbolized professional wrestling to most people was Gorgeous George, a consummate exhibitionist whose long golden curls, brocade and satin robes, and outrageously effeminate manner drew huge crowds wherever he went, all hoping to see a local he-man give him the beating he so obviously deserved.

The Gorgeous One’s success at the box office ushered in a new era of wrestler-showmen, each trying to appear more outrageous than the others. For many, villainy has provided the surest route to fame and fortune. The overwhelming majority of professional wrestling matches pit the Good, the Pure, and the True against the Bad, the Mean, and the Ugly, and a man with a flair for provoking anger and hatred has an assured future in the sport. Since shortly after World War II, the most dependable source of high displeasure has been the Foreign Menace, usually an unreconstructed Nazi or a wily Japanese who insults the memory of our boys in uniform with actions so contemptuous one cannot fail to be proud that our side won the war.

Houston’s most recent Nazi was Baron von Raschke, a snarling Hun with an Iron Cross on his cape and red swastikas on his shoes, who acknowledged his prefight introductions with a sharply executed goose step. Raschke, however, managed to



make one think of George Lincoln Rockwell more often than Hitler or Goebbels, and so never really achieved first-class menacehood. It must be disappointing to be a Nazi and not have people take you seriously.

Now, Japs, especially Big Japs, are a different story. For one thing, they all know karate and can break railroad ties with their bare hands. For another, they are sneaky. So when Toru Tanaka climbs into the ring in that red silk outfit with the dragon on the back, and bows to the crowd and smiles that unspeakably wicked smile, and then caps it off by throwing salt all over everything in a ceremony designed to win the favor of god knows how many of those pagan deities Japanese people worship, you just know that nice young man up there in the ring with him is in serious trouble.

Another major Foreign Menace is, of course, the Russian. Russian wrestlers are named Ivan, Boris, or Nikita, and although they have defected from Russia in quest of a few capitalist dollars, they still retain a lot of typically Communist characteristics, like boasting that Russians invented certain well-known wrestling techniques and predicting flatly that the World Champion's belt will one day hang from the Kremlin wall. Furthermore, they value nothing unless it serves their own selfish aims. After a twenty-year partnership with Lord Charles Montague, Boris Malenko states flatly, "I owe his lordship nothing. Remember one thing about us Russians. When we have no more use for anybody or anything, we let them go. Friendship means nothing to a Russian. When we get through with the Arabs and Castro, you will see what I mean. When we want something we don't care who we step on."

Wrestling fans are generally an egalitarian lot, at least among themselves, and they do not appreciate those who put on airs. So they are easily angered by another strain of crowd displeaser one might call Titled Snobs and Pointy-Headed Intellectuals. These villains, who love to call themselves "Professor" or

"Doctor" or "Lord" Somebody-or-other, use the standard bag of tricks—pulling a man down by his hair, rubbing his eyes with objects secreted in trunks or shoes, stomping his face while he lies wounded and helpless—but their real specialty is treating the fans like ignorant yahoos. They walk and speak with disdain for common folk, and never miss a chance to belittle the crowd in sesquipedalian put-downs or to declare that their raucous and uncouth behavior calls for nothing less than a letter to the *Times*, to inform proper Englishmen of the deplorable state of manners in the Colonies.

A third prominent villain is the Big Mean Sonofabitch. Dick the Bruiser, Cowboy Bill Watts, Butcher Vachone, Killer Kowalski—these men do not need swastikas and monocles and big words to make you hate them. They have the bile of human meanness by the quart in every vein. If a guileless child hands a Sonofabitch a program to autograph, he will often brush it aside or tear it into pieces and throw it on the floor. It isn't that he has forgotten what it was like to be a child. As a child, he kicked crutches from under crippled newsboys and cheated on tests and smoked in the rest room. Now, at 260 pounds, he goes into the ring not just to win, but to injure and maim. Even before the match begins, he attacks his trusting opponent from behind, pounding his head into the turnbuckle, kicking him in the kidneys, stomping him in the groin, and generally seeking to put him at a disadvantage. These are bad people. None of us is really safe as long as they go unpunished.

Fortunately, these hellish legions do not hold sway unchallenged by the forces of Right. For every villain there is a hero who seeks to hold his own against what seem to be incredible odds. Heroes also fall into identifiable categories. Most of them are trim and handsome young men in their twenties or early thirties, the sort that little boys want to grow up to be, and men want to have as friends,



and women want to have, also. Personable Bobby Shane wins hearts when he wrestles in his red, white, and blue muscle suit with the "USA" monogram; and when Tim Woods, dressed all in white, is introduced as a graduate of Michigan State University, older folk nod approvingly. They want their sons and grandsons to go to college, even though they didn't have a chance to go themselves, and it is reassuring to see living proof that not everybody who goes to college is out burning draft cards and blowing up banks.

Though quick to capitalize on the jingoist appeal of matches involving Menacing Foreigners, few promoters will risk a match that might divide the house along racial lines. So black and brown wrestlers usually appear in the role of Hero, behind whom virtually the entire crowd can unite. Browns—Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and Puerto Ricans—are almost invariably handsome, lithe, and acrobatic. They fight "scientifically" and seldom resort to roughhouse tactics until they have endured so much that the legendary Latin temper can no longer be contained. If a black chooses to play the villain, he will soften the racial element; when Buster Lloyd, the Harlem Hangman, came into town, he belittled the skills of his opponents not because they were white, but because they were Texans and therefore little challenge for a man who learned to fight at the corner of Lenox Avenue and 125th Street. Several white grapplers might have been able to handle Buster, but the hero selected to take his measure and send him packing back to Harlem was Tiger Conway, a black Texan.

The purest of pure Americans, of course, and a people well acquainted with villainy, are Red Indians. Most wrestling circuits feature a Red Indian from time to time; in Houston, ex-Jets linebacker Chief Wahoo McDaniel is the top attraction and has wrestled in the Coliseum more than a hundred times in the last three years. Like Chief White Owl, Chief Suni War Cloud, and Chief Billy Two Rivers, Wahoo

enters the ring in moccasin-style boots, warbonnet, and other Indian authentica. He can endure great pain and injustice without flinching or retaliating in kind, but when enraged, or sometimes just to get the old adrenaline going, he will rip into a furious war dance and level his opponent with a series of karate-like Tomahawk Chops to the chest or scalp, then force him into submission with the dreaded Choctaw Death Lock.

Although no Nazi fights clean and few Red Indians fight dirty, not all wrestlers can be characterized so unambiguously. The Masked Man, for example, is sinister-looking, and usually evil, with a name indicative of his intentions: The Destroyer, The Assassin, The Hangman, and Spoilers One, Two, and Three. But some masked men, like Mr. Wrestling and Mil Mascaras (who stars in Mexican movies as a masked crime-fighting wrestler), are great favorites, and Clawman has tried to dignify mask-wearing by having Mrs. Clawman and the Clawchildren sit at ringside in matching masks.

The majority of Houston's wrestling fans appear to be working-class folk. The white and Mexican-American men still wear crew cuts and well-oiled pompadours, and many black men and boys cut their hair close to the scalp. Family men, often with several children in tow, wear Perma-Prest slacks and plaid sport shirts with the T-shirt showing at the neck. Others, who stand around before the matches drinking Lone Star Beer and looking for friendly ladies, favor cowboy boots, fancy Levis, and Western shirts with the top two or three pearl buttons already un-snapped. Occasionally, a black dude in a purple jump suit and gold ruffled shirt shows up, but the brothers in nondescript trousers and short-sleeve knits far outnumber him. The women cling stubbornly to bouffant hairstyles, frequently in shades blonder or redder or blacker than hair usually gets, and at least 80 percent wear pants of some sort.

One basic reason these people come to the Coliseum is reflected in the motto displayed in Boesch's

office: "Professional Wrestling: the sport that gives you your money's worth." Approximately half the Houston cards feature at least one championship bout or a battle for the right to meet the men's, women's, midgets', tag-team, or Brass Knucks champion of Texas, the United States, or the World. If fans grow jaded with championships, Boesch adds extra wrestlers to produce two-, three-, and four-man team matches, heavyweight-midget teams, man-woman teams, and Battles Royale, in which ten men try to throw each other over the top rope, the grand prize going to the last man left in the ring.

Gruddge matches, of course, are the backbone of professional wrestling, and Boesch's skillful exploitation of grudges allows him to draw large crowds and to use wrestlers like Johnny Valentine and Wahoo McDaniel over and over again without having the fans grow weary of them. Men fight grudge matches for many reasons, all of which are elaborately developed in the printed programs and on televised threat-and-insult sessions during intermissions.

They fight to uphold the honor of former associates, as when ex-gridders Ernie Ladd and Wahoo took on Valentine and Killer Karl Kox after the veteran wrestlers called them "big dumb football players" who did not have brains enough to engage in "the sport of the intelligentsia." They fight to avenge wrongs done to members of their family, as when Wild Bull Curry demanded to meet Valentine after the ruffian injured Wild Bull's popular son, Flying Freddy Curry, also known as Bull, Jr. And, in expression of a grudge more generic than personal, they fight to re-establish American supremacy over Foreign Menaces, as when Valentine turned hero-for-a-night by flying in from Asia to repay Toru Tanaka for the punishment the Dirty Jap had been handing out to the local heroes.

But not all grudge matches are fought for such lofty ideals. When Killer Karl Kox and Killer Kowalski wound up in Houston at the same time, they fought for the exclusive right to wear the nickname. In another long rivalry, marked by low but engaging comedy, Boris Malenko sought to humiliate Wahoo, who had kicked out several of the Russian's teeth a few weeks before, by challenging him to a match in which the loser's head would be shaved in the ring immediately afterward. Malenko lost, suffered the jeers of the fans for several weeks—"Hey, Baldy, why don't you go back to Russia?"—then challenged Wahoo to a rematch, the loser of which was to leave the state for a full year. The Russian, who had made himself doubly hateful by assuming the title of Professor, promised to punish Wahoo with his new steel dentures, and fans anguished over the possibility that their favorite Indian might bite the dust. Happily, Wahoo won the match, and Boris allegedly caught the first bus to Lake Charles, Louisiana.

To keep fans from tiring of a grudge series before it has yielded its full potential, promoters enhance the appeal of rematches by scheduling them under special rules and conditions that are something of a drawing card in themselves. The circumstances of previous matches often determine the conditions of the next. If one was decided by a questionable use of the ropes, the next might be fought with the ropes removed. If a cowardly villain frustrated a hero's attempt at vengeance by leaving the ring when the going got tough, he might find his way to safety blocked in the next match by a chain-link fence or a posse of eight or ten wrestlers stationed around the ring.

If Wahoo is involved, at least one match in the series will be an Indian Strap Match, in which the opponents are linked to each other by an eight-foot strap of rawhide. The strap can be used to beat, choke, and jerk, and the winner is the first man to drag his opponent around the ring twice. The Russian Chain Match is based on the same principle, but an eight-foot length of heavy chain is considerably more dangerous than a strip of leather.

For guaranteed action, however, none of these can equal a Texas Death Match. In this surefire crowd-pleaser, usually arranged after several battles have failed to establish which of the two rivals is tougher, there are no time limits, no specified number of falls, no grounds for disqualification. A victor is declared when one of the wrestlers can no longer continue, usually because he lies unconscious somewhere in or around the ring. Fans seldom leave a Texas Death Match without feeling they got their money's worth.

For many regulars, Friday night at the Coliseum is the major social event of the week. All over the arena blacks, browns, and whites visit easily across ethnic lines, in perverse defiance of stereotypes about blue-collar prejudices. A lot of people in the ringside section know each other, by sight if not by name. Mrs. Elizabeth Chappell, better known simply as "Mama," has been coming to the matches for more than twenty-five years. Between bouts, she walks around the ring, visiting with old friends and making new ones. When she beats on a fallen villain with a huge mallet she carries in a shopping bag, folks shout, "Attaway, Mama! Git him!" and agree that "things don't really start to pick up till Mama gets here." When a dapper young insurance salesman flies into a rage at a referee's decision, the fans nudge one another and grin about how "old Freddy really gets worked up, don't he?"

Professional wrestling offers fans an almost unparalleled opportunity to indulge aggressive and violent impulses. A few appreciate the finer points of a take-down or a switch or a Fireman's Carry, but most would walk out on the NCAA wrestling finals or a collegiate match between Lehigh and Oklahoma. They want hitting and kicking and stomping and bleeding. Especially bleeding.

Friday Night in the Coliseum

Virtually all bouts incite a high level of crowd noise, but the sight of fresh blood streaming from a wrestler's forehead immediately raises the decibel level well into the danger zone. This is what they came to see. If both men bleed, what follows is nothing less than orgiastic frenzy. Mere main events and world championships and tag-team matches eventually run together to form murky puddles in the back regions of the mind, but no one forgets the night he saw real blood. One woman recalled such a peak experience in tones that seemed almost religious: "One night, about six or seven years ago, Cowboy Ellis was hit against the post and got three gashes in his head. I grabbed him when he rolled out of the ring and got blood on my dress all the way from the neckline to the hem. I thought he would bleed to death in my arms. I never washed that dress. I've still got it at the house. I keep it in a drawer all by itself."

The lust for blood is not simply ghoulish, but a desire to witness the stigmata, the apparently irrefutable proof that what is seen is genuine. Wrestling fans freely acknowledge that much of the action is faked, that many punches are pulled, that the moisture that flies through the air after a blow is not sweat but spit, and that men blunt the full effect of stomping opponents by allowing the heel to hit the canvas before the ball of the foot slaps the conveniently outstretched arm. They not only acknowledge the illusion; they jeer when it is badly performed: "Aw my goodness! He can't even make it look good!" Still, they constantly try to convince themselves and each other that at least part of what they are seeing on a given night is real. When Thunderbolt Patterson throws Bobby Shane through the ropes onto the concrete, a woman shouts defiantly, "Was that real? Tell me that wasn't real!" And when Johnny Valentine and Ernie Ladd are both disqualified after a three-fall slugfest, a young man tells his buddy, "I think that was real. You know, sometimes they do get mad. One time Killer Kowalski got so mad he tore old Yukon Eric's ear plumb off." But when blood flows, no one seeks or needs confirmation.

The effects on fans of viewing such violence are disputed. Some experiments with children and college students offer evidence that observing violent behavior either produces no change or raises the level of aggressive tendencies in the spectator. Other research, however, indicates that wrestling fans do experience a decrease in aggressive tendencies after viewing wrestling matches. Still, manipulating hatred and aggressive tendencies is not without its risks. Every wrestler has seen or heard about the time when some fan went berserk and clubbed or burned or cut or shot a villain who played his role too convincingly, and Tim Woods, it is said, has had only nine fingers since the night a challenger from the audience grabbed his hand, bit down extra hard, and spat the tenth out onto the mat. Then, too, the possibility al-

ways exists that in the highly charged atmosphere of the arena, a wrestler may lose control of himself and cause real damage to his opponent. If he were alive today, old Yukon Eric could tell you something about that.

The Portrayal of Life that unfolds in the ring is no naïve melodrama in which virtue always triumphs and cheaters never win. Whatever else these folk know, they know that life is tough and filled with conflict, hostility, and frustration. For every man who presses toward the prize with pure heart and clean hands, a dozen Foreigners and so-called Intellectuals and Sonsofbitches seek to bring him down with treachery and brute force and outright meanness. And even if he overcomes these, there are other, basically decent men who seek to defeat him in open competition.

Nothing illustrates the frustrations of the climb to the top more clearly than the Saga of Wahoo McDaniel. For three years, Wahoo has been a top challenger for the National Wrestling Alliance world championship owned by Dory Funk, Jr. A quiet and rather colorless man, who still wears his letter jacket from West Texas State rather than the theatrical garb favored by his rivals, Funk is rough but seldom really dirty, and he knows what he is doing in the ring. Folks may not particularly like him, but they have to respect him. He is no fluke champion, and they know that neither Wahoo nor anyone else can be Number One until he has defeated Dory Funk, Jr., fair and square.

They believe Wahoo can do just that. Wahoo believes it himself and on a dozen occasions has come within seconds of proving it, only to have what seemed certain victory snatched from his hands. Two of their matches ended in a draw. Wahoo lost a third when the referee missed an obvious pin. Funk was disqualified in their next meeting, but titles do not change hands on disqualifications. The champion then won a Texas Death Match by knocking Wahoo out cold with a steel folding chair, a legal but grossly unsportsmanlike tactic.

Two years after they first met, Wahoo and Dory are still at it. In their latest match, the third fall apparently ended with Wahoo the winner and new champion, but as he danced around the ring in triumph, the timekeeper informed the referee that Dory's feet had been over the bottom rope, thus nullifying the decision. The referee ordered the match to continue, but Wahoo missed the signal and Funk grabbed him from behind to gain a quick pin. Fans fumed and screamed, then filed out in silent despair. Long after most of them were gone, Freddy the insurance salesman maintained a noisy vigil at ringside, beating on the mat and shouting to nobody in particular, "People paid good money to come see this, and the damn referee is so stupid he has to ask the timekeeper what happened. There's got to be a rematch."

There will be, Freddy, there will be. □

I MET KHRUSHCHEV AND DIDN'T ARGUE ABOUT REFRIGERATORS

by Calvin Trillin

I want it on the record that when Nikita S. Khrushchev arrived in New York for his first visit, in 1959, the person who welcomed him to the city was me. Me and only me. Unfortunately, it was an act so single-handed that the only witness it produced besides the late Chairman himself was Andrei Gromyko, who is not likely to come forward and volunteer an affidavit.

The subject of an affidavit comes up because this talk about realignments—a thaw with China, a trade war with Japan, an alliance with the Russians—has driven me to the realization that the rules about what kind of background is considered loyal to this country could change without warning someday. In the Second World War, after all, some people were blacklisted by security investigators for “premature anti-fascism,” so it’s not inconceivable that one of these days some people may be blacklisted by security investigators for something like “senescent anti-Communism”—maybe even the same people, and probably by the same security investigators.

Even if it never comes to that, there is already social pressure to repent an imperialist past. A lot of middle-aged people I know sort of mumble when they have to admit to somebody of college age that they actually served in the Army—even if they can prove that there were no wars of national liberation going on at the time. Well, I was in the Army, but let it be on the record that my most noteworthy act while in uniform was extending a cordial greeting to the man who was then regarded as the leader of the Marxist-Leninist world—whatever revisionism he might have fallen into later, years after I knew him.

Q: You would deny, then, that you were considered sufficiently loyal by cold-war rulers to hold a Secret security clearance throughout your military career, while other soldiers on the same base—Rudolph Wurlitzer, for instance—managed to be stripped of their security clearances?

A: I’m glad you brought that up, Senator.

I don’t deny that I had a Secret security clearance at the time of the historic Penn Station meeting with

Khrushchev, having been willing to swear that I had never belonged to all of those organizations that sounded like Great Neck Mothers Against Fascism. I don’t deny that I was based on Governors Island, in the harbor of New York, the headquarters of the First United States Army, nor that it was the same base whose weekly newspaper was edited by Private Rudolph Wurlitzer until his security clearance was withdrawn and he was assigned to policing the company dayroom. Nor do I deny that I have always envied Rudy Wurlitzer for being able to say that his security clearance was taken away during the cold war. But because I was there, I happen to know that Rudy Wurlitzer’s security clearance was taken away from him for writing an editorial in support of National Library Week. That is the truth. I don’t mention this to take any glory from Wurlitzer; I’m happy to credit him with a number of subversive thoughts the authorities didn’t know about. But it was mere chance that his editorial happened to have been read by a colonel in the Intelligence Section who was so finely attuned to the Red Menace that he had the power to see subliminal hammers and sickles in subway ads—by looking squinty-eyed at, say, a home-improvement-loan ad that showed a household hammer and some nails arranged in what other subway riders probably took to be a haphazard pattern.

Also, I intend to remove the black mark of my own security clearance at this moment by revealing some of the secrets it permitted me to be in on. My secrets are from the Monthly Intelligence Report of the First U.S. Army, and my only regret is that I can’t remember more of them. The problem is that they were not the kind of secrets that tend to stick in the mind. It was a slack time for subversives—the McCarthy period was over and the demonstrations of the sixties hadn’t started yet—but the people in the Intelligence Section, most of them civilian employees of the Army, were expected to fill up the Monthly Intelligence Report anyway. They were desperate for reportable acts of subversion. Every month they had to pad their report with items based on, say, the suspicion of one of their children that his math teacher was left-wing or the discovery by one of their wives

that someone had painted a swastika on the A & P in Bensonhurst. I will now reveal the one secret I remember: in a long report about a local radio station that was suspected of being subversive, the Monthly Intelligence Report mentioned as an example of the type of revolutionary subversive allowed to have his way with the station's microphone—"Norman Thomas, a known socialist." There.

Q: That's all very well, but is it not true that while in the Army you served General Douglas MacArthur, a known militarist—the man who attacked the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, our nation's current source of bauxite, from the rear?

A: Well, Senator, I'd be happy to clear that up, and then maybe we can get onto some subject like my contact with recognized leaders of Communist nations.

The situation I found myself in with General MacArthur was not precisely military. The general had under his command at that time nothing more martial than the Remington Rand Corporation, and he was not even exercising the prerogatives of that, having been rendered *hors de combat* by a prostate operation that was, in fact, the cause of our meeting. He was recuperating in a corner room of Lenox Hill Hospital, on Park Avenue, and I was a couple of rooms down, part of the team of First U.S. Army information specialists charged with issuing bulletins every afternoon about how many pats of butter and how many soft-boiled eggs the general had consumed that day.

I have just admitted that while in the Army I was

an information specialist—someone the investigators will undoubtedly refer to as a propagandist for the cold warriors, a seller of the Pentagon. But I can put that in perspective: Who was buying? Consider the butter-and-eggs releases I wrote for MacArthur. Propaganda? Who was propagandized—except, perhaps, a dietitian here and there? I was not, by the way, the specialist who volunteered the suggestion that we put out a composite bulletin—the total number of pats of butter and soft-boiled eggs the general had consumed in a week. I volunteered nothing.

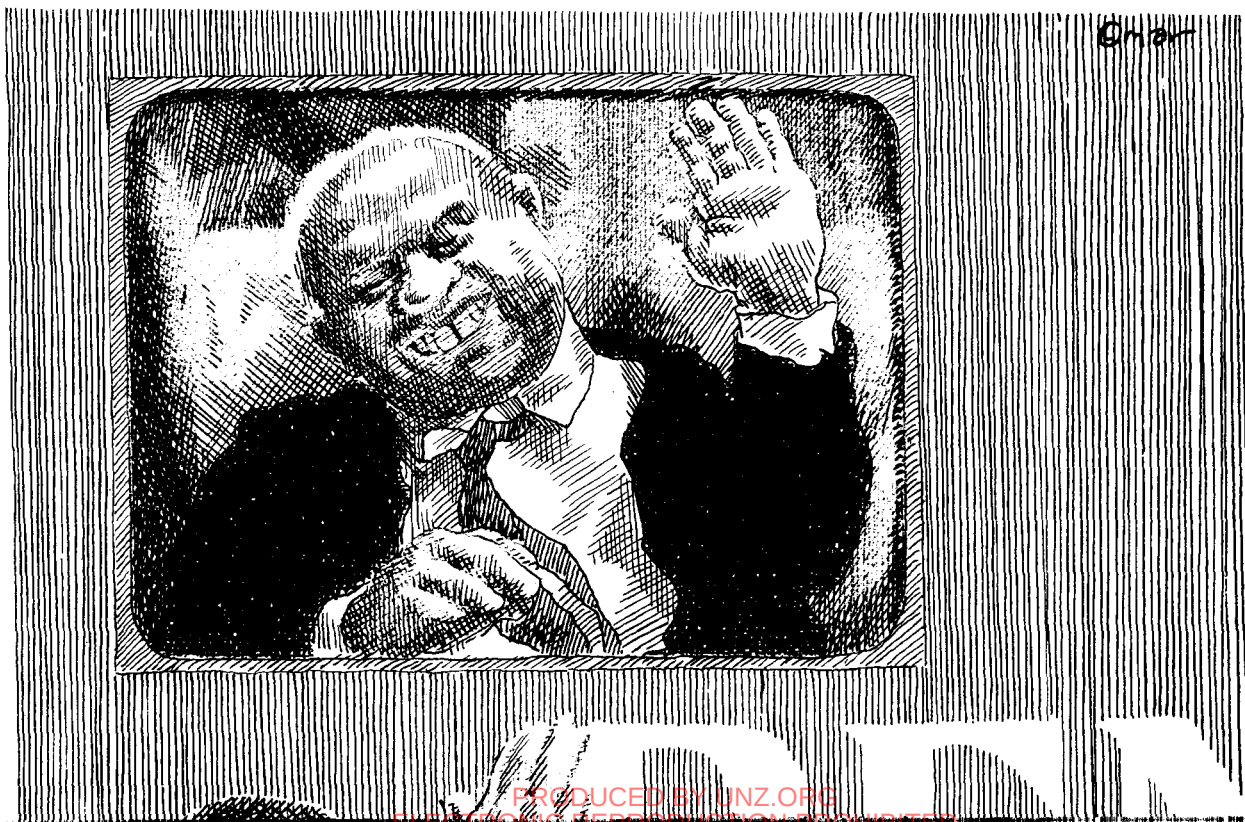
Q: Then it isn't true that the general thought enough of your service to present you with a Remington electric razor?

A: Electric razors make my neck break out.

Q: You didn't answer the question.

A: All right. OK. But I gave it away. Also, everybody who worked on that project got one. If you'll forget about mine, I'll give you the names of everyone else.

Would they dare taunt me with electric razors once it became known that I was the one who greeted Chairman Khrushchev? This meeting did take place. As history transpired, so many press people had decided to cover Khrushchev's first visit to the United States that the specialists from the First U.S. Army Information Section were called in to help handle the crowd. On the day Khrushchev was to arrive in New York by train from Washington, another soldier and I were stationed on the platform where a train of accompanying press people was scheduled to come in.



Our task was to tell the reporters which stairway to use. The press train pulled in, and with our guidance, all of the reporters made their way up the proper stairway. I was about to leave when I noticed another train pulling in one track away. As it slowed to a stop, I was astonished to find myself staring through a picture window into a kind of parlor car that held two men—Andrei Gromyko and Nikita S. Khrushchev. They were sitting at a table, deep in conversation. After a minute or so, they apparently realized that they were in the station, and still talking intently, they stood up. I suppose the curtains must have been drawn on the other window, or Khrushchev and Gromyko might have noticed that the platform on which several million dignitaries were waiting to greet them was on that side. Khrushchev adjusted his tie and turned dramatically from Gromyko to wave out the uncurtained window at—well, at me. I was the only one there. The other soldier was hundreds of feet down the track. The dignitaries were on the platform on the other side of Khrushchev's train. It was me and only me.

Q: So what?

A: So what!

Q: It was a minor mistake. Obviously, when Chairman Khrushchev saw that he was waving toward the wrong platform, he just turned around and opened the curtains and waved toward the right one.

That is the kind of thinking that worries me enough to want to get everything on the record—that failure to understand what the atmosphere was like in those days. The point is not what Khrushchev did but what I did. Try to understand my training. I had a Secret clearance. I was surrounded by the kind of people who looked squinty-eyed at subway ads. Every Wednesday, I was required to see one of those army training films that showed horrifying red claws grabbing off more and more of the map of the world. A lot of people in my position would have shaken their fists at Nikita S. Khrushchev. A lot of people would have shouted “Free Hungary!” or “Self-determination for the Ukraine!” I know that the people who put out the Monthly Intelligence Report would have accused him of painting swastikas on the A & P in Bensonhurst. Just standing there and making no response at all would have embarrassed a man who still had his hand up from waving at what he thought would be a few thousand people. I waved. I waved and smiled. I'm not going to claim that I said, “Mr. Chairman, the workers of the United States ask you to carry back to your country fraternal greetings to the workers of the Soviet Union.” (Although it should be on record that such a greeting could hardly have done any good: Andrei Gromyko may be wily, but I doubt if he can read lips and translate into the Russian at the same time.) But I waved and smiled. Right there in Penn Station, in the middle of the cold war. I even had a friendly little wave for Gromyko. □

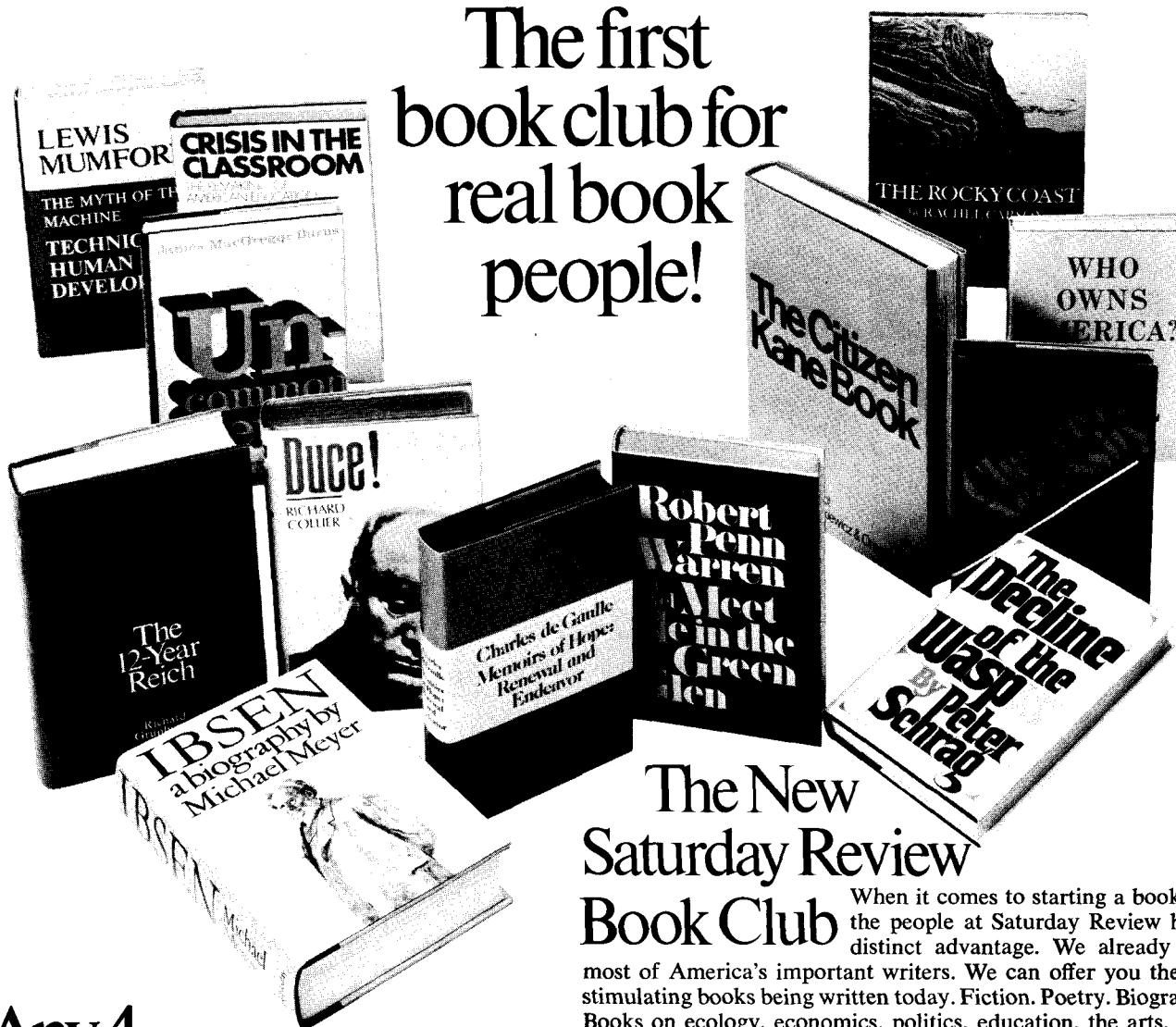
A FRIEND TOLD ME

by James Tate

You came by
several months after,
at your request,
I'd gone home
to America:
you wanted to talk,
she guessed—
before your dinner party
down the street.
And then you couldn't talk,
“not where we'd been together”
you said, crying
on your pretty dress.

stood there on the step,
snow turning scarlet
on your velvet hat,
wishing a larger pain
would soak you up.

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LIFE & LETTERS

A KIND OF VILLAGE SOCIETY

by Joseph Kraft

Japan Inc. is a catchphrase that expresses the prevailing Western notion about this remote and eccentric country. The idea is that the Japanese are not so much a nation as a tribe. Secret bonds of custom and language are supposed to free them from the normal divisions of race, class, and region. They move en bloc. While individual heroes are nonexistent, group performance is extraordinarily high. On that basis there has been built by Herman Kahn and others a prediction that Japan may surpass the United States and Russia in industrial power by the end of this century.

Those views were much in my mind when I came to Tokyo recently. They were also very much on the minds of the Japanese. Indeed, nobody who believes that action is sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought can share Herman Kahn's view of the coming super-state. The impression that arises from a wide variety of random encounters in the world of culture and pop culture is that Japan is currently dominated by self-doubts and misgivings, by uncertainty about how to mix the past and the future, by confusion between East and West. The Japanese see their role in the world through a glass darkly. Far from proceeding with certain purpose toward a well-established goal, the tribe seems to have lost its way.

One sure sign of the rage for self-scrutiny is the popularity of *The Japanese and the Jews*, a curious work by an unknown author which has been a best seller (in thirty printings

and about a million copies) for more than a year. The book won the Oya Prize for the best essay in 1970, and virtually all leading Japanese figures are familiar with the work. Mystery surrounds the author, one Isaiah Ben Dasan. According to his Japanese publisher, Shichihei Yamamoto, Ben Dasan was born in Kobe in 1918, the son of a Jewish trader from Estonia. He is said to have grown up in Japan, migrated to the United States in 1941, returned to Japan in 1945, and lived since then in Japan, Israel (where he supposedly fought in the war of independence), and Terre Haute, Indiana. Efforts to reach Ben Dasan in Terre Haute have failed; he did not appear for the awarding of the Oya Prize, nor is he known to Meredith Weatherby, the American head of John Weatherhill, Incorporated, which will be publishing the book in English. A shrewd Japanese critic, Eto Jun, believes the book was actually written by the publisher, Yamamoto, in conjunction with some Jewish friends, and a lot of internal evidence suggests that the author is a Japanese rather than a Jew.

The central theme of the book is that the Japanese are a unique people shaped by circumstances of climate and soil which demanded a "strictly prescribed, campaign-style agriculture." Campaign-style agriculture, in turn, gave the Japanese "a sense of unity among the entire people of the nation. At any given time of the year almost everyone was doing the same kind of work . . . the exigencies of campaign-style agriculture forbade

the going-my-own-way independent attitude . . . hunger and destitution were the certain outcome of such independence." As a result, the "entire Japanese nation" became "faithful followers of a single religion."

That religion, called Nihonism in the book, enables the whole people to "move together in one line of endeavor." "The Japanese believe in their Japaneseness the way that Jews believe in their Jewishness." Only, the author argues, the Jews have learned through long-suffering the importance of self-defense. The Japanese have always believed that "water and security are free." They have been unprepared to defend themselves against cultural penetration by other people. "Unless you are very careful," the book warns in its operative conclusion, "you Japanese too may suffer discrimination and even forms of persecution."

An opposite viewpoint, a viewpoint that expresses the tyranny of the Japanese majority, emerges from the work of Kobo Abe, a novelist and playwright who has become, since the suicide of Yukio Mishima last year, perhaps the foremost ornament of the country's postwar literature. Abe has at all times worked the theme of man and society, the outsider and the insider, individualism and conformity. In his early works, however, the protagonists were unusual figures set in particular surroundings. Thus *The Woman in the Dunes* is about an entomologist lost in a seaside village, and *The Mask of Another* centers on a scientist who loses his face in a lab

explosion. In Abe's current work the focus is on ordinary people. A play called *Mihitsu No Koi* or *An Unpremeditated Act*, which opened in Tokyo last fall, involves an inquest into the lynching of the man, a hated off-islander, who owns the one bar on a remote island. The policeman who was technically in authority was off duty at the time of the lynching. The fire chief, an off-islander who is determined to save the island from foreign influence, seems to be responsible for the lynching. But witness after witness arises to lie on his behalf. He pays them back by making them dependent—bribing the schoolteacher with drink, breaking a deaf man's hearing aid, throwing the crutch of a cripple into a fire. In the end the only clear thing is that everybody is responsible—and nobody.

Cliff of Time, a film which Abe has made from a short story, is a monologue by a boxer. The incessant staccato of Tokyo life is nicely conveyed by the rat-ta-tat of a punching bag. As he hits the bag in the opening shots, the boxer muses on a coming fight: "I just gotta win . . . It's win or lose." At the end, only dimly conscious after being knocked flat, he stammers incoherently: "Where's it all gone to . . . all this noise. It's so noisy I don't know what's what anymore . . . painful as hell . . . feels like I'll explode . . . Do something, somebody, please anything!"

The Guidebook, a new play by Abe which I saw in rehearsal, centers upon a man and two women obliged to stay in a single room. They have all the most advanced means of sustenance and communication, but nothing quite adds up. The view of the outside which they make by boring holes in the walls with a power drill is fragmented. The newspapers they receive talk about other people. The food they get (by looking up items in a large phone book and arraying sets of cards in a prescribed order) turns out to be Coca-Cola and noodles. The *Guidebook*, which they are supposed to consult when they are truly lost, is filled with wisdom of the life-is-a-fountain variety. One comment is: "Happiness is the ability to forget unhappiness." Another goes: "Influenza is the enemy of loneliness."

At the rehearsal, most of the directing was done by Abe, a slight figure with a monochromatic appearance imparted by black trousers, black tur-

tleneck sweater, and black horn-rimmed glasses. Afterward tea was served and he talked easily. He seemed to understand questions in English without trouble but replied in Japanese through Andrew Horvat, a young Canadian who works on the English language edition of the great daily, *Mainichi*. Though born in Tokyo in 1924, Abe was raised in Manchuria, where his father was a doctor during the Japanese occupation. I asked him if that experience colored his work. He said: "I suppose I was brought up as a colonist. But that isn't a bad way of looking at the world."

After some prodding, he picked up directly the theme of groupism and individualism as applied in Japan. He said: "If one looks from the outside, the Japanese always seem to be collecting in a group. But in fact though the ritual emphasizes collective solidarity, Japanese life is highly differentiated. The Japanese use the old forms as a means to escape from confronting true personal relations. They only appear to coalesce. I'm always struck in countries of puritan culture by the feeling that what you do should correspond with what you say. We Japanese don't feel that special compunction to be candid and honest. In Japan people may be alienated, but they go to extreme lengths to show they're not. This is a kind of village society."

However much Japanese in general may seek to conceal it, the symbols of alienation enjoy an undoubted vogue among the younger generation. It shows up in the beards and jeans that have become part of the regular uniform for the Shinjuku coffeehouses. It even dominated a recent performance of *As You Like It* by a well-known repertory company. The tone of the production was given by a drawing in the program that showed Shakespeare sporting a peace button and holding a pair of dark glasses. Arden Forest, the idyllic pastoral setting of the original play, became in the Tokyo production a kind of hippie commune. Psychedelic lighting created the forest effect; "under the greenwood tree" and all the other lyrics were sung to guitar music; and the country bumpkins, who in the original gathered around the exiled Duke, wore in the Tokyo production corduroy pants and wide belts and mod shirts. The quintessential rural swain in the play, a character called Wil-

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March Report on

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THE HAPPY FAMILY—surely the title is ironic? Only in California could one find a crazy nonconformist family like the Olivers who live according to their own law in sprawling Oonhall. Teddy, a charming easy-going widower, has the wealth to pursue his dream of writing the Great Novel and to indulge his three teenage daughters in doing their own Thing. Hat is hot for Revolution and Women's Lib. Loren is into astrology and raises marijuana in her herb garden, while Becky seems to be a misfit in her passion for horses and deb parties.

Christmas is coming, bringing Aunt Harriett, whose good intentions are flippantly ignored; and Leah Lawrence, a novelist, who is so fascinated by the Olivers that she decides to write a book about them—"The Happy Family."

Alas, the work is doomed to failure; for Leah, the Olivers seem just too happy to be interesting, though Teddy is too attractive not to deserve her extraliterary attention. But the idyll at Oonhall darkens: growing up, losing illusions—each of the girls and Teddy himself prove to be as human as they are idiosyncratic.

As in *The Honey Bunch*, **PATRICIA ZELVER** views her characters with a cool eye, deftly handles a zany plot, producing a sometimes rueful satire of the not-unfamiliar problems of life in outer Suburbia.

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liam, was dressed in jeans, a purple shirt, wide tie, and green vest. In a notable departure from the true text, he said, when asked his name in the Tokyo production, "William Shakes."

After the performance I asked one of the players, a well-known actor-cum-matinee idol of Danish and Japanese parentage named Masumi Okada, for the explanation of the ad lib reference to William Shakespeare. He said: "We noticed all the un-English names—Orlando, Amiens, Jacques. When we saw William, we knew the author was talking about himself. But we thought a Japanese audience might not catch it. So we made it plain."

Okada invited me to an after-theater party that evening. It turned out to be a double party—one half honoring his engagement, the other celebrating the birthday of the Tokyo representative of the Yves St. Laurent fashion house, Masa Kitamoto. It was held in a set of private rooms above a French restaurant. The usual fashion crowd—photographers, models, designers—were on hand plus Okada and his friends from the theater and a sprinkling of young people connected with the French Embassy. After everybody had a drink in hand, Okada went to the center of the largest room with a pretty, young Japanese girl and asked for quiet. He said he had asked the girl to be his fiancée; that she had said something about a ring; that he had replied the only ring would be the circle of his arms about her; and that she had cried. So he had relented. At that point he produced a ring, they kissed, and everybody threw rice at the couple who were thus affianced.

The engagement party then gave way to the birthday party. A Japanese chef in a tall white hat brought in a cake the form and actual size of a spread-eagle woman. The guests then sang "Happy Birthday" in a language that might appropriately be called Japlish. Kitamoto stepped forward, blew out some fifty candles which had been placed around the cake, and was handed, in order to cut the cake, a large butcher's knife. "*Où est-ce qu'il va couper?*" one of the French girls asked. But Kitamoto had no doubts about where to cut. He plunged the knife into the stomach, then turned it to the side and down in the famous stroke of hara-kiri.

A couple of days after that episode,

I went to visit Yasunari Kawabata, the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1968, and a leading critic of the tawdriness arising from indiscriminate blending of East and West. In all his work, and especially in such notable novels as *The Snow Country* and *A Thousand Cranes*, Kawabata casts against the banal modern men from Tokyo the beauties of traditional Japan—the child-women known as geishas and such rituals as the tea ceremony and the flower arrangement. He lives in Kamakura, the thirteenth-century capital of Japan, and he called his Nobel Prize address “Beautiful Japan and Myself.”

Kawabata, a handsome man with striking white hair, a broad face, and wide-set eyes, received me in a blue kimono from which he kept fishing cigarettes and matches and an occasional Kleenex. We sat in leather chairs around a square coffee table in a Western-style room. The walls were decorated with woodcuts, and on the table was a bowl of chrysanthemums. I started off by saying that his Nobel Prize speech had seemed to express a certain loneliness. He said, “Perhaps I am lonely.” But he went on to indicate that he felt kinship with many writers in the West. He mentioned Edgar Allan Poe, Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, Salinger, Dostoevsky, and Mauriac. He said that he had once met Faulkner in Japan. “He kept drinking whiskey from the minute he got up until he went to bed. Later an American publisher told me Faulkner was a shy man. I suppose that being so shy, he couldn’t talk to foreigners without drinking whiskey.” He said that he particularly admired Mauriac. “He was cruel and Catholic. Faulkner was also cruel. Was he a Catholic?”

I asked him about Japanese eclecticism, and the mixing of East and West. He said: “The adoption of Western culture and civilization will have to be continued at about the rate of the past. It is only one hundred years since we started, and it is still a question whether we have transplanted Western values into our lives. Materially, yes, we have your things. But spiritually, that’s a question. I’m sure you are sometimes surprised to see how skillfully things have been integrated here. But many things are not included. In the state of mind of Japan you will find many contradictions and tensions. We are

afraid of these tensions, and of their speed of growth. There are signs that we may be heading for a dead end.”

The Japanese National Railways have bought from Kawabata for promotional purposes the title “Beautiful Japan and Myself.” Going back to Tokyo on the train, I sat under one of the posters bearing that slogan. Since the trip from Kamakura to Tokyo is about as scenic as the trip from Bridgeport to New York, I found myself wondering what it was that Kawabata found so beautiful in Japan. Unable to think of an answer, I

glanced at the two books he had given me. One was the Nobel Prize lecture with the famous title. The other was a reprint of a lecture on “The Existence and Discovery of Beauty,” given in Honolulu. It began:

“I have been staying at the Kahala Hilton Hotel for almost two months, and I wonder how many times I have been struck, in the morning, by the beauty of the assortment of glasses gleaming in the morning sunshine on a long table in a corner of the terrace restaurant which extends onto the beach.”

AFTER THIS LIFE WE WILL LISTEN

by Donald Junkins

THE DONNER PARTY
by George Keithley
Braziller, \$6.50

In April, 1846, a sixty-two-year-old farmer named George Donner left Sangamon County, Illinois, and headed west, one of twenty-five hundred emigrants from the States who had heard of the eternal spring and summer in the California valleys or the rich farming soil of the Willamette Valley, Oregon, and were striking out for Independence, St. Joseph, or Westport, Missouri, where the wagon trains were forming. It cost money to move your family two or three thousand miles in a covered wagon in 1846, and George Donner had it. The ordinary working-class American couldn’t afford the oxen, horses, wagons, supplies, equipment, and hard cash for trail staples, trading-post necessities, land—it wasn’t free until 1862—and extras for crises of various sorts: dead oxen, broken axles, wheels, wagon tongues, and sickness. For the most part, millworkers, laborers, poor farmers couldn’t afford to go.

George Donner was richer than most who caught the “westering” bug. He had lived several lives in several states, was married to his third wife, had thirteen children, and owned a lot of land. (He reserved one hundred and ten acres in Illinois for his three youngest daughters in case they might want to go back home someday.) He equipped three wagons for the trip, as did his brother Jacob,

and their friend James Reed, full of comforts and luxuries. The Donners had three spare yoke of oxen, plenty of milk cows, and five saddle horses. George’s wife, Tamsen, took equipment for botanical and artistic pastimes, and books for a ladies’ seminary she dreamed of starting in California. She also sewed ten thousand dollars’ cash in a quilt.

The train that the Donner party joined in Indian Creek, a few miles outside Independence, got going about a month after the main migration had left. For their 72 wagons, 130 men, 65 women, and 125 children it was tough going almost from the start: alkali country, dust and sickness, crossing swamps, climbing slopes, ferrying rivers at midnight, chasing stray oxen in the predawn. By June 27 they were at Fort Bernard, Wyoming, where they met Reed’s old friend from the Black Hawk War, James Clyman, who had just crossed the Salt Lake Desert with Lansford Hastings: Clyman warned them not to take the so-called Hastings Cutoff. Even if they stuck to the known route, it would be only “barely possible” to make it before the snows. Reed and George Donner disagreed because they had read Hastings’ book *The Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California* (written when Hastings had never seen the route), and when they reached the Little Sandy, the Donners left the main migration and headed southwest. By September 30 they had arrived at the old trail on the Humboldt

which came down from Fort Hall. Those who had stuck to the old route had passed the same spot a month before and were now safely crossing into California. Behind the Donners lay dead oxen, abandoned wagons, equipment, furniture, supplies. By October 19 they were in Truckee Canyon in the Sierras and it was snowing lightly. They started for the pass above Truckee Lake in three groups.

The first group reached two miles short of Truckee Lake on October 30. They tried the ascent on November 1, found five feet of snow and came back. They tried twice more, but it snowed for twenty-four hours, and they turned back to the lake. This same storm stopped the Donner family a few miles east at Alder Creek Valley. Then it snowed for eight days. They would get no closer to the green valleys of California, eighty miles away.

The families built log lean-tos and huts of pine branches, quilts, and wagon covers (one cabin already at the lake was built by an emigrant who had spent the previous winter there with his wife). They killed the remaining oxen and ate even the intestines, hooves, and horns. Snowstorms shrieked in week-long blasts. On November 12, thirteen men and two women turned back three miles east of the divide because of soft snow ten feet deep. On November 21 sixteen men and six women got over the divide with the help of mules which John Sutter had sent from his fort in Sacramento (the snow was crusted over, twenty-five feet deep), but the mules gave out and they all came back.

In December it snowed for a week and five men died, including Jacob Donner. Fourteen pairs of snowshoes were made at the lake.

Item: December 17, "The Forlorn Hope," nine men, five women, and a boy get over the divide. December 20 they reach Yuba Bottoms. Nine days out, they are without food for two days, wandering. Deaths, quarrels, a terrific snowstorm, and they sit in a circle with a blanket over them. Two men die sitting up, holding up their part of the blanket. The storm stops. They eat a man named Dolan.

Item: December 27, "The Camp of Death": dead bodies butchered; some eaten, some put in knapsacks.

Item: Christmas Day at Alder

Creek, Mrs. James Reed uncovers a piece of frozen ox tripe and cooks it with a cupful of white beans (stored up over a period of eight weeks), a half cup of rice, a quarter cup of dried apples, and a two-inch square of bacon. She makes a Christmas Day stew for her children.

Item: "The Forlorn Hope" reaches dry patches of ground, starving. One woman watches her husband's heart being roasted on a stick. They kill and eat the two Indian guides. January 12 they reach a Digger Indian village and eat acorns. Two days, more villages. A handful of pine nuts. A man named Eddy walks six miles, leaving bloody footprints on the ground, to the Johnson Ranch. Four men go back and bring in the other six survivors.

Rescue parties now organize in the Sacramento Valley to brave the thirty-foot snows and the howling storms. The First Relief arrives on February 18 and brings out twenty alive (several already dead), leaving nineteen at the lake and eleven at Alder Creek. The Second Relief, headed by James Reed, arrives on March 1. Diaries of the men report the following:

Half-consumed limbs were seen concealed in trunks. Bones were scattered about. Human hair of different colors was seen in tufts about the fireplace.

[Jacob Donner's children] were sitting upon a log, with their faces stained with blood, devouring the half-roasted liver and heart of their father, unconscious of the approach of the men, of whom they took not the slightest notice even after they came up.

Two weeks later the Third Relief rescued the few remaining who could travel, but Tamsen Donner refused to be taken to safety. One final expedition reached the campsites on April 17 (to salvage property and goods). No one was at the lake. At Alder Creek they found a kettle full of pieces of George Donner, dead only about four days. They collected valuables and went back to the lake, where they found a man named Keseberg, who had been avoiding them, lying down among human bones next to a "large pan of fresh liver and lights" and two kettles containing about a gallon of human blood. They found no trace of Tamsen Donner. Keseberg denied killing

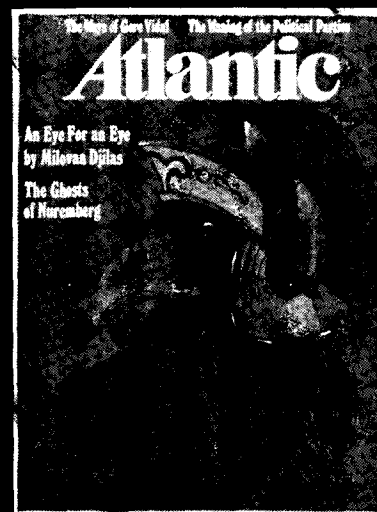
her, but said that he obtained at least four pounds of fat from her body and that her flesh was the best he had ever tasted.

These historical details focus George Keithley's aesthetic problem: bestiality, gore. How to narrate the degeneration without numbing our sense of its humanness. How to describe the Donner Party's extraordinary place in a great historical migration and yet illumine its everyday events. Many writers—historians, novelists, and poets alike—have been fascinated with the Donner Party, but the event's inherent richness overwhelmed any real regard for human motivation. Keithley keeps our attention on why people do what they do.

The Donner Party—5000 lines long—is an epic poem, though Keithley mutes the pretensions of its size by using an open verse form and startlingly natural speech. Other technical successes: a limited cast of characters, a series of expanded minor incidents which both dramatize the life of the trail and foreshadow the final events, and a strategy of understatement which moderates and humanizes the aberrant behavior and the sensational details. It is an epic without "rhetoric."

The poem is told in the voice of George Donner. Donner speaks as if he were keeping a journal. The tone is nonrecriminatory, unselfpitying, a celebration of facts in a conversational idiom. The ghastliness of the historical events is moderated by an achieved innocence in the voice telling the story. In fact, George Donner was a genial and accessible personality: easy to get to know, with a cheerful disposition (Tamsen's letters east describe him as getting up early in the morning and encouraging people), and the emigrants respected his judgment. Somehow, however, his openness is directly responsible for the disaster. When he is elected captain of the group at the Little Sandy in Wyoming, he leads them south toward the Utah desert, pursuing an unknown trail against the judgments of expert mountain men, and against the intuitive protestations of his wife; in the snows he realizes the folly of his trust in Lansford Hastings; he and Tamsen foresee their imminent deaths and accept them (in a sense they were doomed from the beginning: their trust in Hastings' book; their unwillingness to leave their pos-

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Walk On!

by Christmas Humphreys

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sessions and try to walk out of the mountains after the first bad snowstorms; their lack of discipline and expertise on the trail).

The mind of George Donner is the real setting of the poem; his voice purifies the awful facts. When members of the relief parties tell George and Tamsen of the cannibalism, the second-handness moderates the sordid details. Ironic foreshadowing, however, is crucial. In the beginning of the poem Donner tells his wife: "Once we're there/ it will seem worth all/ the work and time it took." As they leave Sangamon County their friends ride out to say good-bye and call after them, "God be with you!" The first scene ends with the burial of Mrs. Reed's mother, and the unforgettable odor from the overturned loam of the Mississippi Valley hangs in the air.

Dramatic events are understated: "We rattled across/ the stones scattered around/ Scotts Bluff where we had to stop/ for repairs./ Our wagons were pulling apart/ and half the freight fell out./ The Murphys' wagon had warped wide open./ Flour floated through the floorboards/ and collected in a cloud/ of white dust/ laying down a little trail/ everywhere we went./ I listened with dismay/ when Jacob said he was leaving/ a linen chest." But moments of harassment and frenzy are cut through by scenes of leisure: swimming, eating buffalo and drinking with Indians, the boys killing doves with slingshots, an antelope hunt, gathering wild flowers. They dawdle in a pastoral wonderland which hides from them their desperate need of time, and some scenes are wholly lyrical: George making love to Tamsen on a knoll near Ash Hollow; the men getting drunk with Crow Indians on the trail; George and Tamsen, starving in the brush hut in the Sierras, giggling over Tamsen's visible ribs and the hanging flab on George's legs, then lying down together. An exquisite sense of economy and control: at Fort Bernard, a few miles outside Fort Laramie, the Donners meet Jim Clyman, the mountain man, who senses their peril. Clyman says: "if it's all the same/ go up to Oregon where you can farm/ or else go home/ but I think/ California is out of the question." One of the party douses the fire and Donner speaks: "The hour was late/ as I lay down/ at the door of

our tent/ wanting to sleep/ in the net/ of the night/ where we swim/ within/ the limits/ of our liberty/ like any creature/ which is caught/ in this life,/ a far-flung web/ of darkness though/ it was woven with the stars."

Keithley's insights into the hearts of the emigrants cut through the surface reporting of journals and historians, and his own fascinations with the beauty of the landscape become part of the poem: marooned in the maze of Wasatch canyons, the party axes their way up steep slopes, and Jacob Donner's oldest son daydreams: "He left/ his hand on the haft/ of his axe and stood/ staring up the slope/ where he was to cut/ but his mind was gone—/ a man may see a valley/ overgrown with trees/ or a simple stream/ struck by sunlight/ in the cave of his chest/ his heart falls/ because he loves/ the land too much with his eyes/ and he feels unneeded/ he is jealous/ of the generous nature/ of all things whether/ they are large or small/ vegetable or mineral/ and the wild life/ and the long lights of space/ so he cannot/ move on nor come/ deep into the place."

In Book II Keithley intensifies the agony of the travel; Donner's voice remains casual but takes on soft tones of inevitability. Particulars enhance his heedlessness of the real trouble they are in:

"People used a meadow like a public park./ When Wolfinger the wealthy German/ strolled across the clover/ hand in hand with his wife/ his shirtsleeves would shine/ as white as the wings of a swan."

Donner's obliviousness to geography creates a sense of grandeur and impending doom (both geography and time are often mentioned, but the mind of George Donner does not dwell on these things). At the end of Book II the reader is being taken into a strange unknown country. The Donners have fallen behind in the Sierras, and the first signs of snow have appeared.

In Book III Milt Elliot reports to Donner what has happened up ahead at Truckee Lake. Later, Moultry tells him of the gruesome experiences of the "Forlorn Hope." On Christmas Day, we see the Donner girls, catching mice on the floor of the lean-to, as crafty as cats, thin and gray.

Near the end of the poem Reed arrives with the Second Relief and

reminisces with Donner (dying from starvation and infection) about the plans they made a year ago in Illinois. Donner speaks: "But that was before/ we came/ to feel/ the slow intelligence of the snow/ groping over the ground/ learning the shape/ of the land and leaving it/ in solitude."

After Reed leaves, George and Tamsen are alone with their children again: "Even now/ as we sat back/ and saw the sun/ shiver/ over the snow/ we were struck/ with wonder/ at the rich/ enduring sound/ of human speech." Then follows the aria which ends the poem, a final testament to the essential drama of ordinary things. Tamsen gathering the money for Stone and Cady, who agreed to take her children to safety, buttoning up her daughters' coats (they abandon them at the lake, but Eddy and Foster later take them down—Keithley leaves the incident out); George reasoning with Tamsen to leave: "are we so different from the dumb/ animals/ that we must lie down/ side by side to die in the same place?/ Is life so cheap?/ . . . You can't say no/ to Tamsen/ or tell her what to do,/ she won't hear you/ talking whenever/ she doesn't want to./"

Keithley demonstrates the disaster implicit in the Donners' naïveté by having George chat in such a way that the cruelty and terror seem both commonplace and inevitable. And yet the calm acceptance of his own death qualifies Donner to speak eloquently in the snow at the end. No other character could lead the reader to the final acquiescence:

"After this life we will listen/ lying in the loose grains of dirt/ with our eyes sealed shut against the roots/ that reach for them, we will hear/ our breath begin again, the engine of the brain/ begin humming in the mulch, and we will climb/ . . . into the fragrant morning/ to hear the heavy stream/ of our blood begin to sing,/ our souls awake and warm once more/ and weaving like a fire/ when the light begins to dance/ in the land of our desire."

From Donner's point of view the story is an authentic American enactment of the classical tragedy: Donner, the rich farmer and landowner, a man well past middle age who has fathered a dynastic family, not reaching toward success in his middle years

but toward a final peace in the serene new country of California. Donner loses his life, his possessions, his savings, most of his family.

The Donner Party becomes an archetypal American adventure; the sequence of events builds on accurate history, precise geography, true speech. The emigrants elected their leader and followed him into an American purgatory: After all, Donner was reasonable and successful, and he had read a book. It is a democratic catastrophe. The self-destruction, the disintegration of human values amidst the grandeur of the North American continent; the self-affirmation, the integration of the individual personality amidst the punishment of nature's worst terrors: here is our capacity for violence which doesn't need the ritual of war.

Few things in America, 1972, are as seemingly implausible as a successful poem of 5000 lines on the American West. Contemporary American poetry—characterized by personal self-consciousness, agonizing self-exploration, social withdrawal, and psychological curiosity—seldom looks

back to an earlier America for clues to explain our own, and there is no epic tradition to speak of.

Our early models, Michael Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom*, Edward Taylor's *Gods Determinations*, John Trumbull's *M'Fingal*, have not been helpful. Crane's vision of America symbolized in the Brooklyn Bridge lost itself after an admirable start. William Carlos Williams' *Paterson* is epic in proportion but not in orientation. Until *The Donner Party*, Stephen Vincent Benét's *John Brown's Body* was our best attempt.

The artistic intuitions surrounding the conception of *The Donner Party* give us our best evidence so far that the truest metaphor of the American epic experience is not the Civil War but the dislocation, the family trauma, and the human savagery in the settlement of the West. Quietly, without pretension, *The Donner Party* does what true national epics always do: it celebrates the trials, contradictions, and ultimate fate of the vital energies that a people value most. The poem, since 1846, has been there, waiting.

THE BOMB BLANKET

by William Zinsser

When I saw a newspaper ad recently for Pinkerton's new Bomb Suppression Blanket, there was nothing for it, as the saying goes (if it still does), but to send away for one. The ad said that the blanket would give us "a degree of protection previously unavailable during the vital minutes before the authorities arrive," pointing out that 5000 bombings have occurred in this country in the past eighteen months, most of which have "caused extensive damage that might have been minimized."

What a comfort those words were! Only a few weeks earlier my wife had asked, "Do we have anything around the house that might minimize extensive damage in the event that we get bombed, especially in the vital minutes before the authorities arrive?" I had to tell her that we didn't.

Now I savored Pinkerton's description: "The blanket is four feet square, big enough to cover virtually any bomb that can be smuggled into your

property. Yet it's lightweight enough to be handled easily by any man or woman. The eighteen-layer core of high-tensile ballistic nylon is covered by fire-retardant herculite to smother incendiary bombs. Multiple vents are scientifically placed to allow the harmless escape of gases generated by the blast. In the case of higher-magnitude explosions, the blanket rises into a parachute-like shape to contain fragmentation."

That sounded fine—as much as I could ask from any blanket. The only part I didn't quite understand was the ten-day guarantee whereby I could return the blanket if I wasn't satisfied. I mean, would the Pinkerton people send someone to bomb us during those ten days? Or would we have to do it ourselves?

I mailed the coupon anyway, and we had a happy time unpacking the blanket when it came.

"Look, dear," I said to my wife, "it's large enough to cover virtually

any bomb that can be smuggled into our property."

"Yet it's lightweight enough to be handled easily by any man or woman," she said, handling it easily.

"That's the high-tensile ballistic nylon," I told her. "Would you believe eighteen layers?"

"And don't you just love the multiple vents?"

"Groovy! And scientifically placed to allow the harmless escape of gases."

She took the guarantee and put it with the warranties for all our other appliances. It said: "If, after ten days' inspection, you're not satisfied, simply return your purchase and we'll promptly refund your money."

After a week I asked my wife if she was satisfied with the bomb blanket.

"Gosh," she said, "it looks nice. And that fire-retardant herculite on the outside is lovely. But we really haven't given it a good test. When does the guarantee expire?"

"In three days. They must be holding their breath down at the Pinkerton office wondering if we've been bombed yet and if we're satisfied."

"Don't we know anyone who has a bomb?" she asked. "Maybe that terrible kid across the street."

"Of course! He'd have one, and I'm sure he'd let us use it."

"But we don't want him to get in the habit. Remember, we only need to test it once."

"That depends," I said, "on whether we get an explosion of sufficient magnitude the first time. It's got to be in the higher-magnitude range so that the blanket will rise into parachute-like shape to contain fragmentation."

Well, somehow my wife thought I was going to arrange to have the house bombed, and I thought *she* was, and the three days went by and we never did get the blanket tested. Now there's no refund if we're not satisfied—which, I see, reading the ad again, is quite possible. It says that the blanket has been "thoroughly tested by actual detonation of nearly every type of homemade bomb; results have been outstanding—up to 90 percent suppression of fragmentation caused by most pipe bombs, hand grenades, and other similar explosive devices."

"Nearly every type"? "Up to 90 percent"? "Most pipe bombs"? It would be our luck to get an entirely

new type of pipe bomb, untested by actual detonation, and then the whole suppression business would go out the window, along with us. It's not so

much that I mind not getting my money back. It's just that I hate to waste those vital minutes before the authorities arrive.

MOVIES

POP NIHILISM AT THE MOVIES

by David Denby

A CLOCKWORK ORANGE
directed by Stanley Kubrick
Warner Brothers

Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* opened the week before Christmas with a media send-off second only to that given earlier in the year to *Jesus Christ Superstar*: cover stories in *Newsweek* and the *Saturday Review*, photo layouts in *Playboy* and *Time*, a special essay by *Time*'s art critic, a place for the film on innumerable year-end "ten best" lists, and, eight days after the opening, the New York Film Critics Award as the best film of 1971. To be sure, the movie quickly received a pasting from critics as diverse as Pauline Kael, Andrew Sarris, Richard Schickel, and John Simon, but more is at stake here than the balance of critical opinion regarding one movie out of the 450 or so released last year. A powerful part of the mass media has settled on this movie as the best our cinema has to offer; and given the subject of *A Clockwork Orange*—the ironic triumph of a sadistic young thug—the choice is a landmark in the history of American mass culture.

There's an air of bravado in the reviewers' praise: the movie is admitted to be far-out, "dangerous," clearly not for everyone. Despite many nervous bows toward the spirit of irony and the complexity of art, the raves foster the impression that Kubrick's daring is a triumph in itself. Perhaps the studios will take the cue, and criminal destructiveness will emerge as a positive value in a host of new movies. Decadence has become fashionable—even the *Saturday Review* is dabbling in it.

After 2001: *A Space Odyssey* I don't know how anyone could regard Kubrick as a profound thinker or as anything but an ambitious cinema technologist, but many of the reviews present him as an acute diagnostician

of the ills of modern civilization. You can lose faith in Kubrick as a director but still be profoundly impressed by his ability to create a personal mystique: his slowness (three films in ten years), meticulousness, and choice of grandiose subjects seem to give off the aura of genius at work. When a mystique is at work, a strange thing happens to some of the reviewers: the new movie is taken completely at face value, at the level of its *intentions*; some of the most enthusiastic reviews of *A Clockwork Orange* consisted of little more than plot summaries laced with the word "brilliant."

There is brilliance connected with this project, but the praise belongs to Anthony Burgess, whose 1962 novel has been mangled in the adaptation. Both book and movie are extremely violent, but Burgess' work forces us to consider our attitudes toward violence with greater honesty (an admirable result), while the movie simply gives rise to feelings of repulsion and dismay. The novel is an account of the adventures of a murderous young thug and is set in a demoralized near-future in England when life will be controlled by roving street gangs and government repression. Alex, its hero and narrator, is a jocular young sadist, an aesthete of violence who beats, robs, rapes, and finally murders for pleasure.

Burgess plays maliciously on the responses of the liberal, well-meaning reader of novels by making us feel a certain solidarity with Alex; the book is disturbing because we identify with him more than conscience tells us is proper. How is it done? Alex narrates his unspeakable acts in an extraordinary teen-age slang that the author has compounded out of English, Russian, cockney jargon, and Gypsy words, and as we learn what the unfamiliar words mean from their surrounding context, we are gradually assimilated into Alex's point of view.

Thus when Alex picks up a couple of ten-year-old girls he describes them this way: "They saw themselves, you could see, as real grown up devotshkas already, what with your old hip-swing when they saw your Faithful Narrator, brothers, and padded groodies and red all plushed on their goobers." When we learn to understand talk like this we feel relieved to be on the inside; moreover, Alex's chummy tone insinuates that we feel as he does, and many of us probably do—Burgess knows that the love of violence has replaced sex as the dirty little secret of our time. If we read very much of this book we realize that our conventional distaste for violence is fairly hypocritical.

After a murderous spree Alex is imprisoned and brutally conditioned so that he cannot act out his violent impulses—turned into a robotized human, a "clockwork orange." Thus the reader is given the added pleasure of seeing violence turned against the aggressive hero—a standard mechanism of gangster novels and movies, which usually end with the gangster's death, releasing us from any guilt we may have felt over our enjoyment of his aggressions. But Burgess has set a trap.

As Alex's prison chaplain points out, in a scene which is clearly the moral center of the book, Alex will no longer be exercising freedom of choice if he is conditioned against evil. Since he cannot choose the bad, he has lost the possibility of leading the ethical life. Ironically, when he returns to his vicious society, his old victims take advantage of his helplessness, tormenting him to the point of madness and suicide, until finally Alex's fate becomes an embarrassment to the "benevolent" ruling powers and he is deconditioned, returned to his former bliss of rape and mayhem.

We experience this denouement with considerable chagrin (we've had our fun, we want a return to a more orderly world), but we must accept it if we really believe in free choice. Thus Burgess makes his case for a voluntary ethics in a way that is morally heroic and extremely demanding, especially since it's obvious that Alex will never "choose" anything but destruction. Alex becomes an albatross hanging from our well-meaning necks; we're stuck with him, and the joke is on us.



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In 1962 Burgess could count on a conventional distaste for violence covering a secret fascination with it; he plays the game shrewdly and artfully by distancing the mayhem through the use of that marvelous made-up language, so we never turn on him and reject him as a mere exploiter. The book is a brilliant balancing act.

But in the interim ten years we've entered a posthumanist phase of total violence in the movies, and most of the old hypocrisy has been stripped away by brute force and repetition. Those who hate violence have stopped going to the movies, or they go and suffer, while millions of others are openly enjoying the freedom from restraints. Such virtuosos in realistic gore as Sam Peckinpah (*The Wild Bunch*, *Straw Dogs*) and Arthur Penn (*Bonnie and Clyde*, *Little Big Man*) have gone as far as possible in showing the horror of what may be done to the human body. To show any more would be pornographic.

Thus Kubrick has a real problem in adapting this tricky book, and I sympathize with his difficulty almost as much as I loathe his solution. If Penn and Peckinpah have tried to make us feel the pain of violence, Kubrick has done just the opposite: he works in a coldly repulsive and kinky style, using freakishness and mod decadence to alienate us from pain. Just so we know what we're talking about: When Alex and his friends break into the house of a writer and his wife, they tie up the writer, stick a rubber ball in his mouth, tape it over, and then Alex slowly scissors off the wife's clothes while kicking the writer in the groin and singing "Singin' in the Rain." Kubrick spares us the rape which follows, but the perverse details in the scene are his own invention; he's obviously trying to dissociate violence from feeling, a miserable ambition. We can't examine our feelings about Alex's crimes because it's insulting even to watch scenes like this. In Kubrick's hands, Burgess' pessimistic Christianity collapses into chic nihilism; where Burgess made us feel like hypocrites, Kubrick simply makes us feel sordid.

The movie's pervasive pornographic pop-art decor is an analogue to violence without pain—eroticism without warmth or personality. The decor has been construed by sympathetic critics as a comment on bad

taste, but I think the pornographic paintings and furnishings function as a signal to the young audience (the only audience that can make the movie a hit) that it may assume a contemptuous attitude toward art. This future society doesn't try to surround itself with objects of beauty or spiritual value, and for many of the young that's cool; it liberates them from the aspirations of their parents and teachers.

The director's use of classical music confirms the point. Burgess has Alex enjoying his most violent fantasies while listening to Beethoven—a satire on shallow "humanist" cant about the improving influence of art on those who love it. Kubrick ruins this modest idea by plastering classical music across all the scenes of violence, to the point where associations of pleasure are removed from the music. A rape scene is set to Rossini's "Thieving Magpie" overture; what is being satirized—rape? Rossini? In another scene, Alex smashes one of his victims over the head with a giant sculpture of a phallus. The aggressive pointlessness of such moments is precisely what turns people on; meaninglessness is like a drug—it puts one in a state where there's no reason even to try to sort things out morally and aesthetically. But this is not the way one responds to art.

As *A Clockwork Orange* ticks on, it gradually becomes clear that Kubrick has made a grotesque extension of the youth movie. Rather than an anti-hero who wins our reluctant and self-mocking acceptance, the movie Alex is an actual hero, and for all his violence, not so different from recent types presented for audience identification. He's more sensitive and honest, bolder, and infinitely more appealing physically than anyone else. Malcom McDowell is sensational as Alex; he has all the insolence and eroticized self-confidence of Mick Jagger in front of a live audience, and because of his performance we are reconciled to Alex *without* irony: we are made to admire him.

The sexual tyranny of the young was always a suggested threat in the youth movie, and now Kubrick has made it explicit and given it a positive value. By shifting Burgess' notion of adult moral corruption to physical unattractiveness as well, Kubrick is catering directly to the sexual snobbery and narcissism of the young au-

dience. He has cast unappealing actors in the adult roles (topped off by Patrick Magee, who is downright ghoulish), gotten them to give freakish performances, and photographed them with wide-angle lenses from above or below, so that they look deformed or monstrous. This also holds true for the prison chaplain, Burgess' one sympathetic character and *raisonneur*, whose key speeches have been cut to a few random remarks that carry very little weight. If the chaplain's role had been sustained, one might understand from the movie how our freedom is tragically connected to the liberty of thugs, and the movie might make some bitter, dangerous, but comprehensible moral sense. Instead of Burgess' rationale for freedom, Kubrick has provided a thug's rationale.

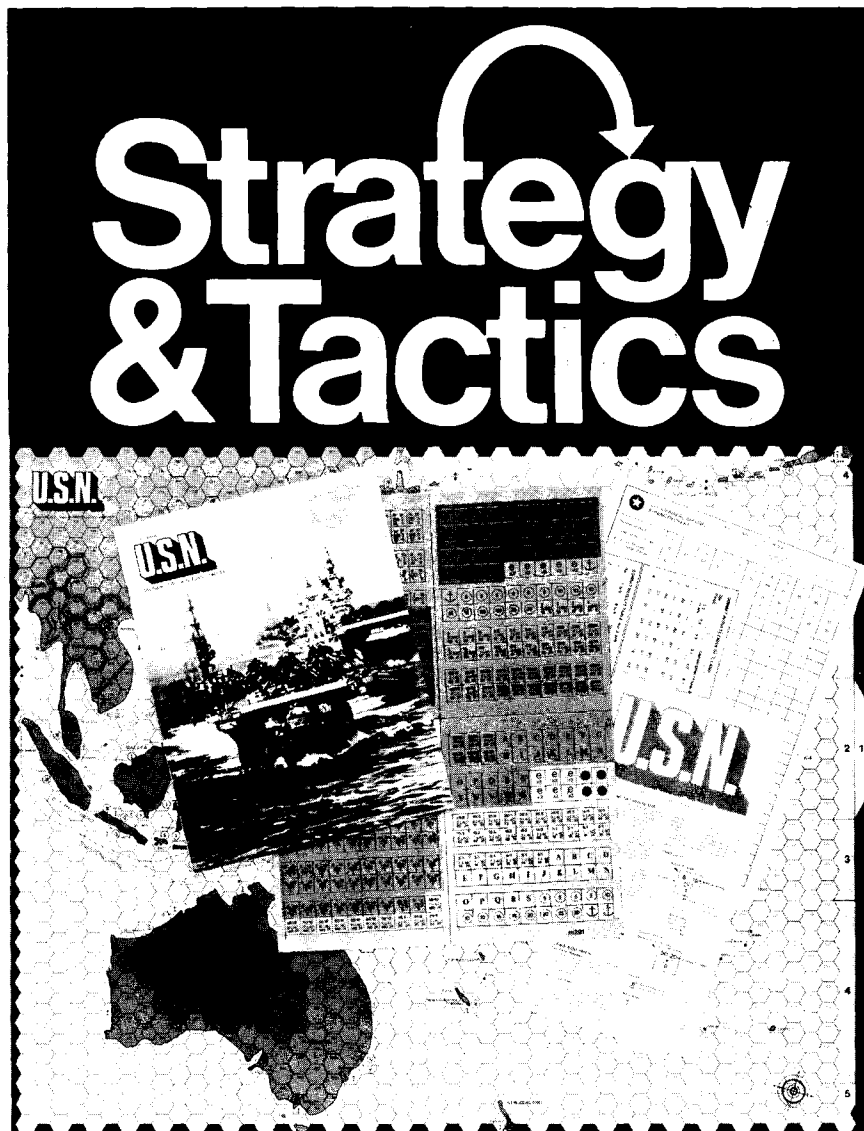
Kubrick's last three movies have been marked by a progressive reduction of human feeling and solidarity; the mask of the ironist and savage parodist has fallen off, and behind it is revealed the face of a thoroughgoing misanthrope. *Dr. Strangelove*, one of the most brilliant of American films in the sixties, was peopled exclusively by caricatures, and the long central section of *2001* turned on the conceit that a computer could be more human than a group of astronauts. Now, in *A Clockwork Orange*, we are not allowed to feel affection for anyone or anything but a sadist. Such a bitter view of humanity could be justified only by the depth and range of a genuine satiric intention, but Kubrick has failed as a satirist. There's no structure of values in his recent films, no standard of humanity by which inhumanity may be judged, no better life implied by the miserable one we see. In *A Clockwork Orange* the director has submerged himself in horror and given up a possible vantage point from which he might survey and judge it; clearly he was drawn to the images of violence themselves rather than any meaning which might emerge from them. Kubrick's supporters say that he has a unique insight into the grinding inhumanity of the modern world, but he must like what he sees; a man who devotes ten years of his life to making movies without human beings in them has obviously found the world in which he wants to live.

The acceptance of *A Clockwork Orange* by a significant part of the

mass media means that a great many people have given up fighting the brutalization of the movies. Journalists are under tremendous pressure to accede to a current fashion, and when it's necessary to take the high line they can always say that what's happening in movies is "symptomatic" of our times. True enough, but how can anyone distinguish the symptom from the disease? The awkward, tedious, and possibly unanswerable question of whether brutalized movies can affect audience behavior is one that every critic avoids, but it preys on some of our minds like a recurrent nightmare. One would like to have the question settled once and for all, but the empirical evidence from the social sciences is fragmentary and inconclusive. Without a conclusive answer a critic can ignore the whole question or pretend that it doesn't matter, or find deep meanings in the atrocities that pass across our screens, thereby justifying them as art.

Movie art! I'm convinced that the current American audience, perhaps for the first time in movie history, is eager to support an extremely tough-minded, demanding, and even tragic type of popular art. In the past decade or so, with its assassinations, riots, and mass killings, and with its endless, murderous, losing war, we have all had some taste of "extreme" experience, some intimation of chaos. The American audience has been prepared by experience for an art comparable to the Italian neo-realist cinema after World War II. But so far the stress of recent American experience seems to have demoralized the movies; all sorts of atrocities are being justified by film-makers with their talk of this-is-the-way-we-live-now. And critics, who are supposed to know something about aesthetics, are supporting some of these movies by an appeal to "reality" and "this is where it's at." The extremity of the times is being used as an excuse rather than as a possible resource.

Perhaps a part of the audience (including some critics) has simply stopped resisting the disintegration of American life; for these film-goers, movies without extreme violence or an aura of decadence must seem lifeless and unreal. They will find their reality in genre movies like *The Anderson Tapes* and *The French Connection*, in which cops, crooks, and victims are equally corrupt and de-



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serving of one another's violence; in racist movies for black audiences like Melvin Van Peebles' hit, *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, which openly exploits the desire for revenge against whites; in Ken Russell's movies *The Music Lovers* and *The Devils*, which turn biographical and historical material into pornographic pagentry; in endless attacks on the uptight middle class which are crueler than even the most complacent bourgeoisie might deserve.

One irony Burgess may not have considered is that the type of hypoc-

risy his book so neatly punctures does provide certain restraints on behavior. The old-fashioned hypocrite, who needed to live in society, hesitated before revealing the nastiness of his true feelings. Now, with the shift in audience and media attitudes, movie rabble-rousers can celebrate their liberation from restraint without fear of repudiation. In fact, they may wind up on the cover of earnest liberal journals. With that kind of encouragement, nihilism is well on its way toward becoming the complacent mass culture of our time.

Siamese mouse ready to sweep the boards in the Any-Other-Variety class.

Unfortunately it bit the judge. But Doreen has three hundred mice at home, and she will go on showing them despite her husband, who says "she's bloody crackers."

Jack Hartley is in fine form today. His red won Best-in-Show last week. Why was the red so good? "Well, you know, every man has his day: that mouse is just right. They don't last long, you know, a few weeks and they're over the hill, but he was just right, it was his day, and I think he's still on top."

So delicate is this balance of good mouse condition that if an exhibitor puts too much hay in the box when the mouse travels to the show, it may sweat and ruin its fine coat.

Handling is a fine art and must also be carefully timed. A man may have a hundred mice in "t shed at back of garden," but if he does not pick the right mouse on the right day, he does not win. Many's the mouse-breeder who remembers the time the Best-in-Show champion jumped down off the stand, ran away, and was never seen again.

I listened to a conversation between Jack and Doreen and some others about one of the mouse-breeders' greatest problems: disposal. A doe produces up to eighteen babies at one go, and the skillful breeder knows, after a day or two, which are worth keeping and which must be got rid of so that the doe can feed the select ones.

"Just knock 'em in the neck, Doreen."

"Eee, I could never. I'd sooner keep them all and feed them too."

"They only last about five seconds," said Jack, "I couldn't do what Bertie does, bang their heads on the table. I just chicken out."

"Why don't you use a killing bottle and chloroform?"

"How can you be sure they're dead?"

"Toilet and chain, that's the best method."

Back at the judges' table, a very tense lady named Jean Hallett is biting her fingernails. Mrs. Hallett, in partnership with her husband, runs a large mouse stud, so winning some firsts is always important business to her. "With nine mice entered that's near enough to a pound to get back

WHAT YOU FANCY

by Anne Angus

At an English village hall in Bentley Heath on a recent Saturday, the Central England Mouse Club was holding its Annual Open Show, just one of several dozen mouse events to be found most any Saturday or Sunday in the Midlands, or in the steep mill valleys of the North and West of England. In fact, November marked the seventy-sixth anniversary of the first Fancy Mouse showing.

In its early days the mouse fanciers tended to collect in areas where the work was nasty: around the mines and mills. In those days they met and showed mice in a free room at the local pub, in exchange for the profit on the beer they drank.

Now, the supposedly affluent London area has a lively and growing mouse club, and holds an annual London show at Alexandra Palace.

The mice we saw on this particular Saturday bear about as much resemblance to the house or field variety as a poodle does to a wolf—evolution goes a bit quicker with mice. On the entry list at Bentley Heath were some twenty-five colors and varieties of markings: white, red, blue, black, cinnamon, silver-tan, champagne.

By 11 A.M. the hall was pretty full, say about fifty exhibitors and their assorted families. We watched the first judge at work for a while. Wordlessly he picked up two blue-blacks by the tails and held them, feet windmilling, to the daylight. After examining their soft dark bellies for a few seconds, he shifted them to the palms of his hands and viewed them head on.

Their petal-shaped ears, translucent and alert, took some serious attention as they vibrated and twitched at him.

The judge, who turned out to be a chemistry teacher from a college a hundred miles away, kept this up all morning, and he and his two colleagues managed to finish the job by teatime, nearly 5 P.M. They worked their way through fifty-odd classes of mice, different colors and patterns, ages and sexes.

At the benches constant rapt conversation, jokes, and arguments kept the day in motion. As we listened, the credibility gap widened.

"'Ere Bert, what would you call this mouse, a black-eyed dove?"

"I wouldn't go ravin' mad over that little 'un," says Bert.

"I've got the little oatmeal here today too," says Alan. "It's a sort of a dilute lilac-chinchilla."

"It's a very dilute chinchilla," Bert snorts without much enthusiasm.

Down the hall a busty blonde is unpacking a box of mice and showing them to her friends. "Here's my little Siamese; I made that variety, you know." Doreen, daughter of one of the Fancy Mouse's founder-fathers, Jack Watts, has the distinction of having invented a new variety and having had it standardized by a two-year process of establishing the true breed. She found an odd brown mutation with "points" rather like a Siamese cat. Deliberately she set out over the generations to lighten it until it was exactly like a Siamese cat in color and marking. Here it was, the

at two shilling an entry, and the prizes only run six shilling, four shilling, and two, with eight for the Best-in-Show, so what with the traveling and all, you hope to get some of it back," explained Mrs. Hallett. "I'm one of the lucky ones; I usually do get it back."

Jean and Tom run their own mouse show back home in Lancashire in a tent at the annual agricultural show. "Oh, it's a job," groaned Mrs. Hallett, a neat cardiganed housewife in her late thirties. "First you've to get out the notices, keep track of the entries, collect the stock at the station . . ."

"What, collect the mice, you mean?"

"Yes, the mice come by rail on their own in boxes, and the station-master rings up to say he's got some stock and you go down and collect them. They start arriving Thursday, and you've got to keep them and feed them and put in some hay and send them back on Monday." This explained why there were 670 mice being exhibited at Bentley Heath but only 120 or so owners present.

"British Rail are pretty good, although there have been mice as got lost," said one owner. Another tells about the time the bottom of his box fell out and the stationmaster rang up to say there were mice running about all over.

"Have you found out how mad we are yet?" said the wife of the club secretary.

"It's either that or the rest of the world that's mad," said a voice behind her.

"You know, you've got something there," said Alan Raice, a mouse-breeder who is also deep in the dog business. Alan works as a laborer and makes a little on the side with his kennels of twenty West Highland White terriers plus boarders, his eighty-two mice, his gerbils, his cat, kittens, and budgies.

"There is something very different about breeding mice. At dog shows the talk around the benches is all about how much money someone's got or what clothes they're wearing—there's no interest in the dogs. Here it's all about the breeding. There's endless interest in it, so many varieties; you can 'make' new mice, you can do so much in a short time . . ."

One of Alan's favorite tips: "Keep as few as possible. If you keep too many, you don't get to know them.

Whenever you see an animal you must speak to it."

Margaret Pearce, a breeder of two years' standing, and a housewife in her spare time, was showing her "variegated" mouse to an old man who has been breeding mice for sixty years. This is an extinct variety, with colored spots spread over the animal's back like spots of ink splashed from a pen. The old man hems and haws and deftly handles the mouse. "It's not the variegated yet, but it has some good spots at 't back," he pronounces, and then goes on to describe his early mousehood: "I were brought up with it. Me elder brothers were in pigeons. We all worked in the mines in Derbyshire, and I got into mice because it's cheap, you don't want the room, you get results quicker than in breeding any other animal, and there's all the fascination—you know where you're going."

Most mouse-fanciers keep them in a shed out back, often on the brink of a steep mill valley, a railway, or just up against the next suburban back-

to-back. An attic, in fact, is recommended in the mouse handbook. Looking after them can take fifteen minutes a day or three hours—it is up to the breeder. *Fur and Feather*, the weekly newspaper of the small-stock breeder, reports a steady circulation of 12,000 or so since 1884. Clubs come and go depending on whether there is a secretary willing to do all the work, or two people willing to share it, or two factions arguing. Many women get up at the same cold, wet 5 or 6 A.M. summer and winter to get in the van with their husbands and come dish up dinners, tea, and gossip at the shows.

At the annual mouse dinner dance one old-timer remarked, "Not many as brought their wives, and those as haven't are having a better time."

If the mouse people are a little wary of strangers' laughter, they have their own laughs too.

"In a way," says Alan Raice, "it is the very triviality of what we are spending our time on that makes it so satisfying."

THE PERIPATETIC REVIEWER

by Edward Weeks

THOSE DAMNED REBELS

by Michael Pearson
Putnam's, \$7.95

In this vigorous narrative Michael Pearson, a newcomer among British historians, has retold a story dear to American hearts. His purpose is to show the provocation, the organization, and the military course of the American Revolution as seen through contemporary British eyes. The British governors and commanders in the field reported home regularly, as did Lord Stormont, the ambassador at Versailles, who knew how successfully the rebels were wooing French support; their letters and memos are part of the source material, as are the minutes of the Cabinet meetings jotted down by the soberest of the ministers after the private dinners.

More lively and personal are the journals and long letters written home by the younger British officers, of which Mr. Pearson quotes more than fifty. Taken together they form

an exciting, highly partisan view of a war which the British always seemed on the verge of winning, but never did.

The provocation rightly begins in St. James's Palace where George III, aged thirty-five—"dull, pedantic, stubborn, precise"—was determined to repress the upstarts in Massachusetts. At his command he had a Tory majority in Parliament, whose loyalty he had secured with bribes of £70,000; a pudgy Prime Minister, Lord North; and the bitter Lord George Germain, Secretary for the Colonies, once cashiered from the army for cowardice and now eager to recoup his reputation. None of these three autocrats properly estimated the depth of the opposition across the water.

Britain, the most powerful, imperial nation in the world, had outgrown both her army and her navy. When the rebellion reached down the coast as far as Virginia and the Carolinas, King George decided to hire troops to send overseas with his veteran regiments, including the Gren-

dier Guards, in the largest operation Britain had ever mounted. He first appealed to "Sister Kitty" for 20,000 Russian infantry, but after a brief flirtation, she refused: "There are moments when we must not be too rigorous," was the comment of Catherine of Russia. He then turned to the Prince of Hesse-Kassel for those regiments of Hessians, with their highly colorful uniforms and their wicked bayonets.

Mr. Pearson has as good an eye for character as for action. Most perceptive are his portraits of the five British commanders: the Howe brothers—the elder, the Admiral, the more important; "Billie" Howe, who was slow to go to battle and always waited to finish an engagement tomorrow; his replacement, Sir Henry Clinton, self-seeking, querulous, but a cool head; Johnny Burgoyne, the dashing leader of the Dragoons but a disaster in command; and Lord George Cornwallis, ambitious to replace Clinton and as helpless as Burgoyne when the Continentals and the French combined to close in on him in Virginia.

The Howes, who were early on the scene, were charged with the diplomatic mission of placating or buying off the rebels, and enjoyed temporary success with the American Tories in New York and in Philadelphia. Hoping to conciliate, they did not push home their military advantage when Washington was on the run. But first and last, as Mr. Pearson relates, these veterans from Europe were governed by a Braddock psychology—they wanted the rebels to meet them in

serried ranks, as in the Seven Years' War, where musket, bayonet, and saber did the work, not behind stone walls, with the withering rifle fire so devastating at Lexington and Bunker Hill. They resented what they called "the sneaky rebel technique," not realizing that the Colonists had adopted it as the natural defense against the Indians. And they never learned: the mistakes so costly to Howe at Bunker Hill were repeated five years later by Tarleton when his apparent victory at the Cowpens was thrown into "unaccountable panic" by the paralyzing blast of Morgan's Rifles. As the author says, "The true battle for America was always fought in the elusive realm of confidence." As the British lost theirs, Washington gained.

I cannot remember reading anywhere a more vivid account of the action at Boston, Saratoga, or Long Island; and, with the last roll of the dice, of that incredible timing which brought together the French fleet and the Continentals at Yorktown. What gives spice, humor, and pity to all this are the quotations from Baroness von Riedesel's diary as she cares for her children in a bloody cellar and helps to nurse the dying General Fraser; Benjamin Franklin's witty demeanor both in London and in Paris; and the letters from combatants as perceptive as Lieutenant Mackenzie. It is good to be reminded that long before the final peace, in London the war had become as unpopular as Vietnam.

THE CONSPIRACY
by John Hersey
Knopf, \$6.95

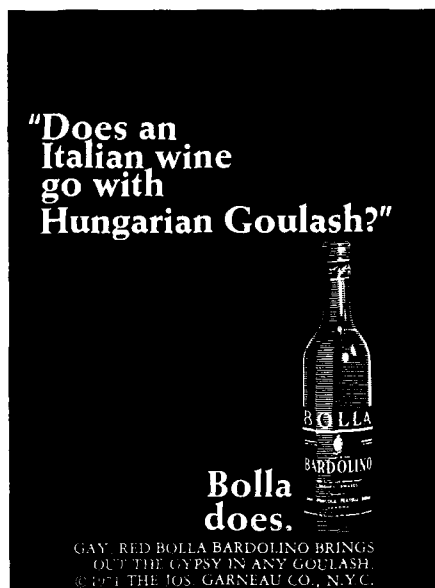
Having presided for five years as Master of Pierson College at Yale, during which time he wrote no fiction, John Hersey last year withdrew from the contention of the campus to enjoy the stimulus and privacy accorded the writer-in-residence at the American Academy in Rome. Inspired by Tacitus, drawing from the obvious sources, and, as he says in his Afterword, departing from them too, he has taken for the theme of his new novel the conspiracy which was intended to assassinate Nero and which Nero squelched in the year 64 A.D. Nero was then twenty-seven, bull-necked, dissolute, and infected by the murders that had brought him to power; he had lost his two most de-

pendable advisers—Burrus, by death, and Seneca, the philosopher, by banishment. He had turned against his friend Lucan, of whom he was jealous and whose poetry he had proscribed. Rome had just emerged from the nine-day fire, which the Emperor was rumored to have started; the Senate and the Plebes were jumpy.

The evil genius in the story is Tigellinus, a vicious horse trader, "a tough of the tracks, a born alleyway policeman, vulgar, cruel for the sake of cruelty," as Seneca describes him, whom Nero has elevated to be Co-Commander of the Praetorian Guard and who has enough imagination to play on Nero's fears and his lusts. Like Stalin's Beria, he suspects everyone, and in his effort to smoke out the plotters, Tigellinus arranges a fete on the Lake of the Golden House, where Nero will be enthroned on a barge drawn by a thousand swans and where in small booths on the shore fifty beauties of noble family behind flimsy curtains will be available first to Nero and then to all comers. When the suspected conspirators, who are of course shadowed, refrain from the orgy and say nothing, Tigellinus is driven to more desperate invasions of privacy—slaves are bribed, homes ransacked, letters intercepted, and what transpires comes to the reader for the most part in the secret dispatches between Tigellinus and his underling, Paenus, the Tribune of Secret Police.

The thoughtful resistance to such tyranny is expressed in the letters between Lucan and his uncle Seneca: Seneca from his country refuge, speaking of his tutelage of young Nero, of how the boy was poisoned by his mother Agrippina's intrigues until he could stand her no longer and had her killed, and of how that poison had infiltrated the nobility of Rome; and Lucan, for his part driven to distraction by the degradation of the man he had once loved, pleading with his uncle to tell him what a writer's responsibility should be in such a crisis.

There are striking scenes throughout this story: the fete; Piso's banquet, when Lucan's angry verse lampoons the Emperor; the Interrogations, when innocent and guilty testify before Nero; the torture of that defiant, honest woman Epicharis; and the tragic climax, when



Seneca and his wife, Paulina, put their wrists side by side and with one motion of the dagger Seneca opens the veins of both. I think what troubles me about this story is the method of telling it; the dispatches and the intercepted letters do not convey as much strength and individuality as a man speaking; there is too little differentiation between the conspirators, and in the absence of description the picture of Rome fails to emerge. But Latinists will read into this what others may miss.

THE NIXON RECESSION CAPER
by Ralph Maloney
Norton, \$5.95

This is a novel of light comedy, decent to read and quite funny, by a writer who whether from experience or observation knows a good deal about the effects of alcohol and the effects of the recession in Eastern suburbia. The title is slightly misleading, for Ralph Maloney is making fun not of the Nixon Administration, but of a bunch of New York big shots who once earned large sums in Manhattan and who now are flat broke.

The caper takes place in Southport, which could be any one of the snobbish, well-to-do towns in Fairfield County, Connecticut, and the man who originates it is Sanford Campbell, the attractive and, until recently, successful investment broker. Sandy owes everyone money and is uncertain how long his credit will last at the Southport Country Club. Indeed, the recession has hit him so hard that he counts on the arrival of his unemployment check, which he is too proud to cash in his regular bank in Southport; apologetically he takes his checks to a small branch bank in the Vista shopping center, a projection so new that no customers seem to have discovered it. The manager and cashiers of the Vista branch of the County Trust Company are as strange to Sandy as he is to them. Casually he notices how open and innocent the little place is, and his business instinct tells him that the A & P supermarket next door and the discount house and one or two other shops in the center are probably its main depositors. Sandy also notices that there are fewer than twenty cars in the vast parking area. As he drives home with momentary cash in his pocket and debts weighing heavily on his mind,

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the big idea hits him—why wouldn't it be the simplest thing in the world to rob that defenseless little bank?

He must find accomplices as respectable as himself, and as a short-cut he drives to the country club and strips from the bulletin board the list of members who have been posted for nonpayment of accounts. The three men most heavily in arrears are not known to him personally, but he admires the way they have been spending money they haven't got and he figures that they must be just about as desperate as he is. So he introduces himself to them over the telephone and invites them to a luncheon at the club.

The three conspirators are an odd assortment: the most glamorous is Harry Price, star of stage, screen, and radio, whose Hollywood agent has gyped him and whose often-married wife, Betsy, is using her claws; the most conscientious is Sam Deitsch, a dress manufacturer, who had the bad luck to gamble on midis and now has a warehouse of dresses he can't sell; and the biggest physically is Jack Carmody, a former advertising executive in charge of cigarette advertising on TV. Mrs. Carmody has taken a secretarial job to keep the home fires burning, and Jack has taken to the bottle. Sandy Campbell was quite right in his suspicion: all three are busted, and once they get over the initial shock, the thought of ready cash is more than they can resist.

The guest cottage in the woods behind the Campbell home becomes their place of business. Here they establish a new firm by the name of Four Talents, Limited, incorporated in Delaware, with fancy letterhead and name checks: under this ruse they will invest the money that they intend to steal. Carmody had been an infantry officer in the war, and the habit of command comes back to him. It is he who orders their disguises and their guns, and he whose formidable presence prevents their leaking any details to their wives, who are wild with curiosity.

How much their holdup yields, what they do with the money, how they divert themselves against the possibility of detection when it is known that the FBI has been called in are some of the mysteries that make this novel fun. A more unlikely mob of thieves and their molls was never brought together.

SHORT REVIEWS BOOKS

by Phoebe Adams

THE FRIENDS OF EDDIE COYLE by George V. Higgins. Knopf, \$5.95. Mr. Higgins, an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Massachusetts District, has written a short chilling novel about gunrunning, bank robbery, and the frustrations of police work. While the narrative is terse, the characters—all unattractive or frightening or both—are decidedly garrulous. No doubt because he meets them in his trade, Mr. Higgins does not make the ivory-tower assumption that thugs are inarticulate, and much of the action is carried by convincing dialogue which is also grimly amusing. Another interesting point is the basic similarity of all these rogues. They vary in age, style, and vocabulary, but are alike in being incapable of pleasure.

THE AMERICAN WAY OF VIOLENCE by Alphonso Pinkney. Random House, \$7.95 and \$1.95. Professor Pinkney describes an unfortunately predictable series of atrocities, public and private, committed in and by the United States. Each group of outrages is followed by a neat little homily attributing the evil to the "dehumanizing" effect of our capitalist society. The author knows better than to represent violence as a unique American invention, but he neglects to ask why millions of, by implication, relatively nonviolent and not dehumanized persons should have come to this country and submitted to such extreme alteration of their characters. His proposed panacea is socialism. He never compares crime statistics in any socialist country with those of twenty years ago in that same place.

THE WAY IT IS NOW by Sallieingham. Viking, \$6.95. Short stories, all centered on women, all concerned with subtle family tensions. The social and psychological observation is acute and conveyed with an austere minimum of action. Everything of importance happens offstage or inside somebody's head.

THE LATE GREAT CREATURE by Brock Brower. Atheneum, \$6.95. In the long opening section of his novel,

Mr. Brower presents Warner Williams, a none-too-competent journalist in the throes of rewriting a piece on one Simon Moro, an actor specializing in horror parts and taking them all too seriously. The slightly boobish Williams and his struggle with a welshing editor and a recalcitrant subject are maliciously true to life; while Williams controls it, the book is brilliant social comedy. Then Mr. Brower shifts narrators and takes up, first with a film director improbably blabbing to a tape recorder, and then with Simon Moro himself. Things fall apart in a welter of old Gothic novel clichés.

WE MUST RUN WHILE THEY WALK by William Edgett Smith. Random House, \$7.95. The history of Tanzania is an inevitable component of a study of its President, Julius Nyerere, but Mr. Smith keeps it short. (Nobody could keep it simple.) Most of the book sticks firmly with Nyerere, who emerges as an impressively intelligent man and a fascinating talker, whether he is berating a group of foolish students or explaining his interest in China.

ONE HAND CLAPPING by Anthony Burgess. Knopf, \$5.95. Why this satirical novel, published in England in 1961, should have been so long delayed crossing the Atlantic is a mystery. The story concerns a young man who, thanks to a freakishly photographic memory, wins a quiz show. He puts the loot on horses and shortly has 80,000 quid, give or take a few shillings. It is his intention to live high on half the money and blow the rest on a gesture of protest against the state of the world. The proposed gesture is rather splendid. It happens also to be insane, and the fellow's wife takes steps to thwart it. One can make something pretentious of Howard as man destroyed by technology and of his wife as the indomitable life-force, but the notable point about the book is that it is ingeniously and devilishly funny.

STUBBS by Basil Taylor. Harper & Row, \$20.00. Although Mr. Taylor has been studying the painter for years, he has found out very little about George Stubbs as a person, for he seems to have been the least written about man in eighteenth-century England. Possibly the explanation lies in

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his specialty. As a superb horse painter, he worked for the hunting and racing crowd, and while his clients were no doubt more literate than Tony Lumpkin, they may have shared that squire's dislike of things written by hand. But if Mr. Taylor has learned little about Stubbs, he has learned a great deal about the paintings, which he describes with enthusiasm and particular attention to the delicately interlocked asymmetrical composition which is characteristic of Stubbs's work. The only possible complaint against this handsome book is a shortage of color-plates; those included make one want to see everything in polychrome. But since the notes on location reveal that much of Stubbs is unseeable because the pictures remain in private collections, let us be grateful for what is available here.

THE EWINGS by John O'Hara. Random House, \$6.95. O'Hara's last novel may please his devotees, but will do little for anyone else. It records the doings of a rising young lawyer, his amiable wife, and his lesbian mother, in and about Cleveland during the First World War. The lives, loves, and conversation of these people are reasonably believable and totally uninteresting.

JORGE LUIS BORGES: SELECTED POEMS 1923-1967 edited by Norman Thomas di Giovanni. Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence, \$12.50. The translations are by various distinguished poets, but all remain definitely Borges. A very fine collection which includes the Spanish texts.

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AMERICAN INDIAN ART by Norman Feder. Abrams, \$35.00. While a certain amount of ethnological and archaeological information is necessarily included in the text, the objects illustrated in this book have been chosen primarily for their beauty, which is sometimes unfamiliar but consistently recognizable.

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